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The impact of a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program on struggling readers at the middle school level

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THE IMPACT OF A LIFE-APPLICATION LEARNING INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM ON STRUGGLING READERS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

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DEDICATION

To **Don Tarver,**

Who believed in children, education, life-long learning
And most of all – me.

And foremost,

To my dad, **Bobby Stringer**,

A true educator who believed that all children can learn
A man who believed that all children deserve every opportunity to succeed
A teacher who taught me to believe

Dad, I share this degree with you.

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ABSTRACT

This eight-week descriptive study examined the impact of the incorporation of a Life-Application Learning Methods Program on struggling middle school readers. Two questions were explored: 1) How did incorporating life–application learning into the middle school curriculum impact reading motivation?, and 2) How did incorporating life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impact the reading levels? Participants in the study were eight eighth-grade students considered to be struggling readers

Qualitative methods were used for this study utilizing responses from a survey, two inventories, student journals, and researcher observations. Data gathered suggested that students are more likely to become motivated and engaged readers when the subject matter directly relates to their lives and that students are more likely to invest in learning reading skills and strategies in order to pursue information they find relevant.

The Life-Application Learning Methods Program incorporated the skills outlined in the lesson plans of regular classroom teacher with current reading materials including, but not limited to, novels, magazines, newspapers, recipes, instruction booklets, job applications, and internet resources. Activities included oral reading, group activities, presentations, research, internet exploration, and creative writing.

Results of the descriptive study indicated that struggling readers involved in a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program demonstrated gains in both motivation and reading ability. A reexamination of the study identified the immediate usefulness and personal application as being the significant catalyst for becoming active readers.

The findings highlight the students' desire to find meaning in their reading assignments. In addition, findings suggest that integrating multiple sources of reading materials invite greater student participation.

Implications resulting from these findings could be instrumental in improving student engagement in the classroom. By knowing and understanding what motivates student to learn, educators can provide instruction interesting to the students and in compliance with state mandated curriculum guides.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Far too many school students are being retained. In the state of Louisiana 10.7% of the public school students were retained in the 2000-01 school year (Louisiana Department of Education, 2002). This is a 2.4% increase from the year before. In 2000-01, the number of students retained more than tripled in the 8th grade (20.7%) as compared to the previous year. The focus of this research is to evaluate whether students, especially struggling readers, can achieve at a higher level when they are able to immediately relate to and apply what they are asked to learn. The means of access to learning can frequently be found in the manner in which information is presented. Struggling readers typically have difficulty mastering the basic skills established by the curriculum guides. Even more laborious for them is content material presented in a seemingly disconnected fashion, disconnected from their lives and further alien to their prior knowledge. For those who struggle, it is vital that life-application learning is integrated into the classroom curriculum. Life-application skills are those skills that students will be able to use not only in the classroom, but also in their lives outside of an academic setting. They include, but are not limited to reading, comprehension, critical thinking, and evaluation of materials. These skills could be better acquired through life-application learning, that is, by mastering the skills required by the curriculum guides while incorporating materials utilized on a daily basis. Some examples of materials include, but are not limited to, recipes, newspaper, television, video, letters, magazines, and a host of other texts daily encountered.

All students, regardless of academic level, are part of the community, and as such should be encouraged to participate in a meaningful way allowing them to receive the maximum benefits of an education that does not only address those skills necessary for the classroom, but also for participation in society. Furthermore, connecting curriculum to their experiences and knowledge validates their current representations and conceptual understandings, providing opportunities for instructional significance. Engaging reading materials directly applicable to their lives may enhance their participation in the classroom.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact on reading interest and achievement that the use of real life-applications may suggest. Findings from this study will be analyzed in an effort to determine why fluctuations in students' desire to read occur as well as how these fluctuations affect the reading ability levels of the students. Ammann and Mittelsteadt (1987) postulate that by "using newspapers instead of traditional reading skills material for classroom reading and writing activities, students who had failed for years as language users experienced success as readers" (p. 1). Other daily activities, such as writing personal letters, reading directions for a VCR or video game, or journaling, provide valid contexts for students to comprehend the importance of reading while at the same time understanding the importance of journalism, opinions, expressing oneself, communication with friends and family, and following a sequence of activities. Burns (1999) qualifies "the big picture in reading . . .[as involving] the idea that print represents spoken language and is used to communicate meaningful thoughts in books, magazines, signs, letters, notes, newspapers, advertisements and computer screens" (p. 4). By offering students the opportunity to be situated among reading materials used by persons of

all ages on a daily basis, students more clearly understand that reading is not solely a school activity, but also a lifelong activity.

When students participate in reading activities linked to their lives, students are more likely to participate and welcome mastering materials that may present a challenge. The key for struggling readers is for the teacher to integrate activities and materials with the text in an effort to provide more meaningful instruction related to the context of their daily lives. "Young people, like adults, seem to have an innate dislike for 'busywork.' When a task is filled with what students would label 'real world' utility, it generally becomes intrinsically more motivational" (Sagor, 1993, p. 104). By linking classroom activities immediately with the reality of their lives, students are more inclined to feel that they have something to proffer to the assignment or conversation. The mastering of the activity is then not so unrealistic. Students can derive information from prior knowledge and experiences needed to assimilate this new knowledge. Dewey (1944) said it best when he wrote: "An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance" (p. 144). Students formulate theories of their world. Struggling students need to be able to have access and understandability to not only verbal and visual communication and interaction, but also written language.

> Students do need to learn that reading is a real-life activity, used by adults and children for functional purposes, and that completing worksheets isn't the primary goal of reading. . . Authentic texts serve this purpose admirably, though a basal story can also be interesting, connected text. (Burns, 1999, p. 4)

In combining traditional texts with supplementary materials applicable to their reading levels, students may want to participate more fully. Students may also be afforded the opportunity to bring examples from newspapers, magazines, videos, or books to demonstrate the concepts addressed in classroom discussions. Their capability in connecting the concept with materials

they use daily may enhance a student's understanding of the usefulness of reading, not just for a section in the text but for life. "The most critical attitude or realization is knowing that reading is meaningful communication. This attitude is influenced by observing expert modeling, by being encouraged to seek meaning, both in guided and independent reading, and from discussion and social interaction" (Burns, 1999, p.180). In the case of many struggling readers, the teacher may be the dominant influence of encouraging reading in a child's life.

It is increasingly significant that students not only hear and visualize what is being read in the classroom, but also actually participate in lifelong reading. "In order for any student to become a lifelong learner, he or she must be able to handle print — environmental print, recreational print, and vocational print" (Collins, 1996, p. 4). Presenting opportunities for students to read and discuss materials about which they are interested solidifies the knowledge that reading is not only substantive but also enjoyable. It is vital that educators present materials in such a way that reading is not relegated to a class assignment, but perceived as a foundation upon which to build greater benefits and understanding of life.

> Frequently, a question that is asked directly or implied through the behavior of our at-risk students is, "Why should I do this?" The answer they are seeking and the one we generally supply must speak to the benefit that completing the task will provide for them personally." (Sagor, 1993, p. 104)

There must be some immediate connection and benefit to the student's life. In many cases the struggling reader is overwhelmed with the quantity of materials requiring attention. Without a useful connection, he or she may reject the obligation, fall further behind academically, and eventually renounce education entirely. Students decide to quit coming to school because they cease to feel welcomed. When the school environment invites them to participate, students want to remain a part of the community, thereby, achieving academic and personal goals benefiting their present and future successes.

Historical Perspectives: The Setting

The Teacher

An integral component of any study is the environment within which it is conducted. In this study, Elizabeth French, Ph.D. (pseudonym), a qualified educator with 18 years of experience in teaching students from diverse backgrounds, has agreed to provide the setting of the implementation of this study. She received her Ph.D. in reading and certification as a reading specialist at a local university. Dr. French is active in her pursuit of continued educational and professional growth. She is an avid proponent of creating an environment of self-discipline, self-discovery and independence among her students. Dr. French was chosen for her desire and willingness to invoke positive changes in the presentation of reading and language arts curriculum.

The Community

The community is located in an impoverished section of a large southern city of 400,000 residents. The community was originally established to house employees of a local major industry. At one time the property was a discerning working class neighborhood. Currently, the majority of the houses are in disrepair and property value is remarkably poor. The industry has begun to purchase as much property as possible for future expansion. Demolition work is prevalent in this community.

The majority of the inhabitants are of low socio-economic status, living in dismal poverty and receiving government assistance. Mrs. Dee Horne (pseudonym), a guidance counselor for the school, was interviewed about the community and the school. When asked to describe the community in which these students reside she used one word – "devastation." According to Mrs. Horne, many of the parents/guardians and/or adults in this neighborhood have not completed

high school and have little or no vocational training or job skills. The majority are dependent upon government assistance. It appears that although many of the parents and guardians of these students would like to share in their children's education, they feel inadequate to provide the necessary academic assistance. This is clearly demonstrated by the poor attendance at Parent Teacher Organization meetings and Parents' Night, yet school functions like Family Science Night and ball games draw huge crowds.

The community tends to be rather transient, with many of the students moving from residence to residence, depending on adult relationships, financial situations, and supervisory needs of the student. According to Mrs. Horne, almost 40% of the students are being reared by someone other than their biological parent or parents. In addition to the transient nature of the community, the neighborhood suffers from extensive substance abuse, prolific amounts of prostitution, and violence directed toward individuals of all ages.

The School

The school featured in this study employs 26 teachers and serves nearly 650 inner-city students in grades six, seven, and eight. Over 97% of the students are African-American. Other races represented in the school include 2% European-American and 1% Asian-American. Because more than 90% of the students come from low socio-economic status homes, the school has qualified as a Title I school. Seventy-seven percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch, while the state average for students receiving free or reduced lunch in public schools is 61% (Louisiana Department of Education, 2002).

The school has two community partners who assist in limited financial matters, tutoring, and mentoring. One is a large local industry and the other is a community service agency.

The results of the 2001 Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) indicate that the majority of the students are functioning below grade level. The sixth and seventh graders took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). The ITBS is a norm-referenced test that measures how well students score when compared to a national sample of students. The 2001 scores for the sixth graders yielded an average percentile rank of .40, while seventh graders experienced average scores at the 47th percentile.

The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21), given to eighth graders in 2001, revealed that only 58% of eighth graders at this school met or exceeded the Language Arts standards and 47% of the Mathematics standards. This instrument is designed to measure how well students are mastering the specific skills identified for each grade level by the state of Louisiana.

The school building was constructed in 1930; the buildings are in need of significant renovations. Paint is peeling on the walls, air conditioning and heating units are noisy and frequently unreliable. The administration and staff of the school have spent many hours and personal dollars to paint, repair, and create an atmosphere more conducive to learning. The revitalization projects appear to have increased pride and academic perseverance in both the staff and, most importantly, the students.

Significance of the Study

The focus of this study is to explore the attitudinal and academic effects of integrating "real life" reading situations with the established curriculum guide. Furthermore, this study will explore whether the students' reading levels will change as a result of their exposure to the concept that their reading ability can directly affect their lives. In order for struggling students to

remain informed, they must be able to process information, especially through reading. For this to take place, they must learn the skills and strategies presented in the middle school classroom. Therefore, a greater sense of learning can begin when struggling students become cognizant of their actual knowledge base and the benefits of becoming more invested in the educational process. "Unfortunately, the disabled reader has often been so removed from reading as a tool for living and learning, that he or she has given up" (Collins, 1996, p.2). When educators combine the classroom reading curriculum with personal interests and experiences, students realize that reading is not only for learning in the classroom, but also a tool to increase opportunities outside the school environment.

Eight eighth-grade students will participate in this study. A purposeful sample, "a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1998, p. 48), will be used. These students will exhibit a range of reading abilities and are representative of the school population.

Research Questions

1. How will incorporating of life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impact reading motivation of the participating students?
2. How will incorporating of life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impact the reading levels of the participating students?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Language has particular importance in societies. It contributes significantly to school achievement, as well as to formal and informal speaking and writing. "The behaviors that are key to academic literacy include the abilities to provide sequenced explanations, logical arguments, grounded interpretations, and abstract analysis" (Jacobson, Thrope, Fisher, Lapp, Frey & Flood, 2001, p. 528). However, for many students, learning to read does not occur easily.

> Rather, as reports at the national, state, and local levels indicated, millions of youngsters at the intermediate and middle school levels read below a fourth-grade level and experience deficiencies in basic reading skills such as word recognition, decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. (McCray, 2001, p. 298)

These students have come to be known as "struggling" readers. They come from a variety of ages, cultures, backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels, and they present a significant challenge for educators. Prior to the current use of the term "struggling," these students were referred to as "at-risk" readers. Slavin and Madden (1989) describe an "at risk" student as one who is in danger of failing to complete his or her education with an adequate level of skills. Risk factors include low achievement, retention in grade, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socio-economic status, and attendance at schools whose population is qualified as largely poverty-stricken. Currently, the term struggling reader "appears to be the preferred term among reading professionals for adolescents who for whatever reason are unable to keep up with the reading demands of the school curriculum" (Alvermann, 2001, p.679).

To better understand the determining characteristics of the struggling reader, one may refer to Alvermann's (2001) definition. "A cursory analysis of the table of contents of the recent International Reading Association book Struggling Adolescent Readers: A Collection of Teaching Strategies (Moore, Alvermann, & Hinchman, 2000) reveals that the term struggling can refer to youth with clinically diagnosed reading disabilities as well as to those who are unmotivated, in remediation, disenchanted, or generally unsuccessful in school literary tasks." McDermott and Varenne (1995) would argue that there are three constructs which underlie the labeling of students as "struggling," and that these constructs are the creation of 'School' which includes not only the school personnel, but all of those involved in developing the overarching assumptions about academic mastery. The deprivation approach, the difference approach and the culture-as-disability approach are categories applied to students who do not appear to acquire knowledge at the same rate and with the same proficiency as the "traditional" student (p. 327). Students can be labeled as struggling readers based upon their environmental influences, socio-economical status, cultural or linguistical background, or rates of acquisition.

The deprivation approach refers to the adolescent who does not fall into the distinct categories of cognitive processing abilities established by standardized, performance-based, or informal testing. These milestones, determining a students' ability, or lack of ability, to competently succeed at the determined grade level may imply that the student was not adequately exposed to the literacy in the home, in the classroom, or in the community. As McDermontt and Varenne (1995) put it, "there is a public assumption that, although society can care for those who lag behind, they are out of the running for the rewards that come with a full cultural competence" (p. 334). Finn (1999) claims these students fall into the academic track of "functional literacy, literacy that make a person productive and dependable" (p. ix) leading to

low expectations borne from the attitudes of educational community, almost driving the struggling reader to settle for minimal success rather than being provided the higher expectations of unlimited success in the classroom and in preparation for the future.

The second category suggested by McDermott and Varenne (1995) is the difference approach. This approach argues the failure of education to meet the needs of students considered to be different from accepted academic culture of education. Bronzo, Valerio, and Salazar (2000) addressed the difference approach by exploring alternative texts with students from a predominately Hispanic culture. The middle school was facing losing accreditation due to low standardized test scores. Further exploration of the academic requirements and intellectual abilities uncovered the predominant problem – students were not unable to master the skills, they were merely disconnected from the curriculum. A curriculum was developed compatible with the content previously established incorporated with a variety of reading materials from various cultures. The students not only felt connected to the literature of their own culture, but also gained a greater understanding of the traditions and beliefs of others. Examples of language and traditions of various cultures were compared, couched in a manner inspiring students to link their prior knowledge of their own heritage with those different from their own. By providing students with positive reading identities, they became involved in multiple literary practices that had meaning for them and their communities.

The third approach is culture as a disability. McDermott and Varenne (1995) also explicate the differences that account for reading difficulties, under what conditions disabilities may occur, and which reasons can be categorized as cultural issues. "Culture constructs disability, as well as ability" (McDermott & Varenne, 1995, p. 328), implying the socio-cultural implications of those students who are deemed as "struggling" - but hardly inconsequential given

that "the lives of those unable to do something can be either enabled or disabled by those around them" (p. 329). Readers compacted into "special" categories know all too well which side of the enabling or disabling binary they occupy and the high costs of the consequences such identities carry.

> Gee's (1996, 1999) concept of identity, in the socially situated sense of the word, leaves room for multiple identity formations within different Discourses, which to his way of thinking function as our "identity kits" – that is, our ways of seeing, acting, believing, thinking, and speaking that make it possible for us to recognize (and be recognized by) others like ourselves. (Alvermann, 2001, p. 679)

Struggling students, especially at the middle school level, are attempting to create those identity kits, and they desire to belong to the group. As each student attempts to belong within his or her surroundings – the process of adopting, transforming, and being transformed by those around them takes precedence over individualizing. Struggling students often feel the need to blend in rather than stand out – seeking to find a safe place to remain unnoticed. The fear of not being accepted by the peer group appears to be greater than the risk of standing out in an adverse way. Peer groups become the most highly regarded form of affirmation.

Unable to keep up with the criteria of the classroom, struggling youth begin to give up (Sagor, 1993; Alvermann, 2001; Allington, 2001).

> When these [struggling] youth find the school's institutionalized practices of reading and writing irrelevant and at odds with their motivation to learn, they typically look for ways to avoid such practices. Often, their avoidance takes the form of high absenteeism, neglect of homework, and overall disengagement leading to failure. (Alvermann, 2001, p. 684)

These destructive behaviors are consequences of their predicament as struggling students. Merely acknowledging the problem is not enough. "Indeed, reading underachievement in the U.S. in the intermediate and middle school grades, and subsequent academic failure and dropout after eighth grade, indicates the need for immediate, explicit, and effective reading interventions

for students at risk and with reading disabilities" (McCray, 2001, p. 298). Therein lies a socially constructed identity with societal consequences, one that should be addressed.

To consider the needs of struggling readers, one must compare the strategies of more successful readers. Given any text that readers may encounter, from a simple grocery list to the most complex physics problem, successful readers are motivated to complete the task, read with fluency that results from knowledge of the language of the text, and comprehend the given text. Educators must provide opportunities for struggling middle school readers to develop these necessary skills.

As students move up in grade level the spread of achievement widens between struggling and successful readers. "Researchers indicate that students with reading-related disabilities are at risk of becoming further behind in reading each year in school (Stanovich, 1986), that they are without individual or small-group, specific, intensive, and explicit reading instruction (Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm & Elbaum, 1998)" (McCray, 2001, p. 299). Consequently, it is not uncommon to find students in upper grades reading several grades below their grade placement.

Struggling readers often sit in classrooms where they have not been provided with the opportunity to feel successful in literacy. They sit among proficient readers who rapidly recognize words, read aloud with smooth and fluent expression, and participate in book discussion. Struggling readers are frequently presented with teacher-selected materials, either grade-level selections that are too difficult for them or below-grade level materials in which they have no interest. Struggling readers want to see themselves on an equal playing field with their peers. "Perhaps most significant for classroom teachers is that students who struggle in reading lament over not learning the subject matter afforded their peers. They worry that they do not get

to read the same materials as their friends who are good readers" (McCray, 2001, p. 299). Struggling readers are searching for a way to remain competitive with the rest of the class.

Students desperately need a link between the classroom materials and their lives. Through exposure to academic texts that demonstrate a relevance of classroom learning to real life success, struggling students see a greater value in working harder in school.

> Largely through the writings of a cross-disciplinary group of scholars (Gee, 1998; Knobel, 1999; Lankshear, Gee, Knobel, & Searle, 1997; Luke & Elkins, 2000; Luke & Freebody, 1999; New London Group, 1996), reading educators around the world are being exposed to the idea that literacy education is less about the skill development and more about access to cultural resources and to understanding of how schools that promote certain normative ways of reading text may be disabling some of the very students they are trying to help. (Alvermann, 2001, p. 679)

In a recent two year study, the education faculty at Indiana University at South Bend (IUSB) implemented a research based program at a local alternative school. The program design focused on using best practices in instruction with specific emphasis on reading, writing, and technology (Sheridan, 2000). Initial assessments of the 93 ninth graders tested indicated the mean instructional level to be that of a beginning sixth grade reader. In designing a program of interesting activities integrating reading, writing, and technology replete with links to the students lives, student scores and participation grew by 25 percent. During the two-year period student enrollment, attitudes and participation increased (Sheridan, 2000).

Although struggling readers need instruction in reading strategies "to help them learn to decode, to engage in dialogue about the meanings of unfamiliar words, to understand what good readers do when they read, and to anticipate possible challenges they encounter when reading" (Jacobson, Thorpe, Fisher, Lapp, Frey, & Flood, 2001, p. 530), they should also have an interest and a connection to the text. Classroom materials should be presented in an environment that engages the struggling students' prior knowledge of the subject, and yet, offers the opportunity

and encouragement to achieve at a higher level. "Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) asserted that schools with large numbers of students at-risk for reading difficulties need 'rich resources' such as small class sizes, good libraries, supportive instructional programs, high–quality instructional materials, and a warm and supportive learning environment" (Edwards, McMillion, Turner, & Laier, 2001, p. 149). Educators must offer these students multiple resources and methods combined with enticing challenges that allow students to move forward in their academic careers without the constraints of the fear of being labeled as one who is "slow."

> Effective new programs for at-risk students should encourage high level thinking, reasoning, and problem solving at all stages of literacy. Such curricula have been shown to be more effective than traditional skills-oriented curricula for at-risk students, especially with those students from high poverty backgrounds. (Ogle, 1977, p. 6)

Studies focusing on the problems struggling students encounter have been conducted for many years (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Bandura, 1977; Chall, 1983). Research and findings have been reported; however, the problem still exists. In an effort to better understand the inherent difficulties facing struggling readers the following areas will be discussed: instructors, word recognition and language acquisition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation and opportunities, and attitudes toward assessment.

Instructors

At a recent National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in Baltimore, Robert Barr and William Pratt (1999) urged those in attendance to consider the fact that schools will never be forceful enough to eliminate poverty or to improve all dysfunctional families, but instead, must focus on those things that school personnel can do – teach all children to read. While, early advocates of school reform incorporated characteristics of effective schools in their programs for at-risk students, the educational reform of the 1980's and 1990's increased interest in the belief that school was the key for intervention for struggling middle school readers. This belief gained

momentum. Hoffman and Rutherford (1984) reviewed several school effectiveness studies, focusing their attention on reading programs. They identified specific characteristics of program designs that enhanced the success of their projects. These included the adoption of specific roles for the principals and the demonstration of motivational attitudes by the faculty and staff of the school. Encouraging parents and members of the community to participate contributed to the success as well. Research repeatedly suggests the need for the entire school to be involved, especially as instruction relates to reading.

Adler and Fisher (2001) concur with other researchers (Adams, 1990; Hiebert & Raphael, 1998; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) that strong, effective, and balanced reading instruction provided by knowledgeable teachers is the key to successful early reading achievement. Instruction that provides opportunities for students to actively engage with printed materials, utilize word recognition skills, and exercise choice in reading considered interesting, using a wide range of materials within the context of developmentally appropriate instruction, continues to be a major deterrent against reading failure.

However, research conducted by McIver and Plank (2001), suggests that even with the best instructional plan, the most qualified teachers, and the most enthusiastic school teams, students still have to fully participate. Many middle school students are not confident that their teachers are "on their side" or care how they feel. As a result, these students may demonstrate an unwillingness to fully cooperate with the teacher's academic plan for the classroom or to accept academic instruction from the teacher. In order for positive relationships to develop between teachers and students, "flexible and dynamic student grouping, ongoing student assessment for instruction, multiple reading programs, safety nets for struggling readers, and data- and research-driven reading instruction" (Adler & Fisher, 2001, p. 618) should be essential components. Ogle

(1997) contends that by using alternative assessment such as portfolios, presentations, projects, and demonstrations, struggling students are able to engage in more meaningful tasks that more closely relate to real-life activities and problem solving, thereby providing a variety of learning methods to meet the needs of struggling students. Learning methods alone can not transform a struggling reader.

In an effort to understand why the students performed well in some classes and not in others, Plummer (1998) conducted a two-year study of 19 teachers involved with middle and high school struggling students. Plummer interviewed the teachers and analyzed their teaching methods and philosophies in an attempt to identify salient practices that increased student success. The researcher quickly found that it was not the preparedness of the lesson, but the attitudes of the teachers that made the difference. "Teachers need to make active efforts to create positive and respectful relations with at-risk students if they want the students to behave in a respectful manner toward them" (Plummer, 1998, p.13). The major themes which evolved out of Plummer's study included "(a) maintaining control and empowerment, (b) demonstrating concern and understanding, (c) balancing structure and flexibility, and (d) weighing positives and negatives" (Plummer, 1998, p. 12). The students of the teachers who appeared to demonstrate a greater sense of connectedness with the students and were able to "know" the students and be involved with them on a more caring level were more successful and engaged readers as opposed to the students of the teachers who were disinterested, disengaged, and unable, or unwilling, to see the potential in each student.

Cheek and Collins (2000) reiterate Stainback and Stainback's (1992) idea that the classroom is "a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her

educational needs met" (p. 343). All students want to feel that it is "safe" to explore new challenges, and that support will be available for them when they struggle. They need to feel a sense of security in their academic environment in order to learn.

The security the students most need at school is the knowledge that the educational leaders view them as viable members of their academic community. Sagor (2002) contents that students need credible evidence that they belong and demonstration of the relationship between effort and success.

> So-called struggling readers whose identities are marked by unsuccessful efforts at (or perhaps by resistance to) "getting reading right" may have decidedly different perceptions of how agency and autonomy work from those of their teachers and other significant adults in their lives. (Alvermann, 2001, p. 676)

The struggling students' long standing beliefs of inability to adequately compete in the classroom must be debunked. "None of this can and will occur for at-risk students if they view their teachers and schools as adversaries or judgmental evaluators" (Sagor, 2002, p. 38). Feeling a sense of belonging builds a foundation for personal growth. When alienated and discouraged students begin to see teachers as interested in their success, they begin to have reason to honor the teachers' role as an educational coach and mentor. "During early adolescence, students' relationships with teachers need to evolve so that teachers allow students to become more self-regulating and responsible for their own learning while providing students with dependable support and external standards" (MacIver & Plank, 2001, p. 4). Through encouragement and curriculum designed for success these middle school students can begin to redefine their attitudes about themselves as learners. When given the opportunity to pursue reading materials in their interests, students frequently discover that they possess a wealth of knowledge and that the knowledge they "own" is not just necessary for knowledge – but for life. "This ceding of

responsibility and control to students is a very salient indicator to students that the teacher respects them and understands an early adolescent's need for autonomy and peer interaction" (MacIver & Plank, 2001, p. 4). When students are allowed to choose reading materials for themselves, they select material about which they are interested and have some prior knowledge. Allowing the struggling reader a greater sense of control over their learning, offers them the opportunity for greater success. "Personal efficacy is developed as students assume greater responsibility for their own learning, practice persistence in accomplishing meaningful tasks, and learn to become problem solvers" (Sheridan, 2000, p. 47). The freedom to discuss materials and how it relates to the students would offer a bridge of self-confidence and interest needed to carry students toward the next academic challenge. The connectedness provides the link.

The connectedness that the students feel within the school walls should also extend to their every day lives. Alvermann (2001) addresses this problem suggesting that "although it is the case that literacy can be taught in classrooms, it also seems likely that an insistence on privileging school literacy over out-of-school literacies will ensure that students will continue to struggle in reading" (p. 684). Some struggling readers are unaware of their own literacy because they often view reading only as a school activity – something used for answering questions on a worksheet. Incorporating the discourse of the students' communities outside the halls of academia can be used to raise their confidence levels and broaden their view of the importance of reading in the "real world." Students do not appear to view magazines, the internet, menus, and pleasurable literacy skills as reading. Because is serves a function, they do not connect it to school. Demonstrating the connectivity of language to life, teachers can assist struggling readers by bringing the students' world into the classroom and thus help students to read the world around them and acknowledge the importance of non-school print.

Word Recognition and Vocabulary Acquisition

The ability to identify words through decoding, sight, context, or by other means is one of the main components of literacy, and it is a primary area of concern with respect to struggling readers. Classroom teachers are well aware that all students periodically have difficulty with word recognition. Although growth in vocabulary knowledge occurs rapidly and almost effortlessly for some children, the rate at which word meanings are acquired can vary greatly. Many children with reading problems have poor vocabularies, and the gap between the vocabulary they need and the one they have widens over time (Biemiller, 1999). Struggling readers often have a limited sight vocabulary and over-rely on one recognition strategy such as phonemic oration. Failing to understand that meaning is inherent in the reading process, they often word-call inaccurately (e.g. "house" for "horse"). Struggling readers become "word-callers" versus "word-comprehenders." Under these circumstances the text holds no meaning for the reader and becomes a list of words instead of a process with the author.

In content area reading, the development of vocabulary as a study of relationships seems especially pertinent. Knowledge of word meanings and the ability to access that knowledge efficiently are recognized as important factors in reading and listening comprehension, especially as students progress to middle school and beyond (Chall, 1983). Recognition of isolated words in print represents little understanding of the context. Using a vocabulary matrix to establish the dimensions of a subject may serve to assist in linking the language in print to the prior knowledge of the reader. The power of any vocabulary matrix lies in its image of connected ideas, in its process of uncovering context for a new word, and in its visual reminder of gaps in understanding.

The findings of Curtis and Longo (2001) indicate that weak vocabularies prevent the comprehension of grade level texts. Curtis and Longo (2001) conducted a 16-week intervention with middle school students demonstrating reading abilities below grade level.

> Because of gaps in background knowledge, these students tend to recall very little from typical instructional experiences designed to acquaint them with grade-appropriate word meanings. And in cases where they are already familiar with a word's meaning, their knowledge is frequently based on their aural experiences rather tan on any encounters they might have had with the word in print. (p.3)

Their intervention provided multiple opportunities for students to make connections between the vocabulary words and their prior knowledge. Students were asked to employ the cloze technique, create analogies, and participate in read-and-respond activities. By introducing and activating word meanings, students were able to construct meaning, and of further importance, were able to comprehend various passages using the vocabulary words.

Vocabulary development in any subject should proceed by providing the students with an opportunity to reveal a vocabulary framework. Innate vocabulary knowledge may help them associate meaning with new vocabulary. If a word is not in the reader's oral vocabulary, the reader will have to determine the meaning by other means (National Institute for Literacy, 2000). The content of meaning is influenced by the text and by the reader's prior knowledge and experiences. Struggling readers, regardless of age, have many life experiences through which teachers can create text. It is important to recognize that some second language learners or children of poverty may have experiences that differ from the teachers' experiences, or that they may offer a different perspective on the same experience. In honoring the various backgrounds of the students, the definitions and contextual meanings within a given sentence become evident revealing meaning and a set of relations upon which to build.

The importance of vocabulary knowledge has long been recognized. In 1925, the National Society for Studies in Education Yearbook (Whipple, 1925) noted, "Growth in reading means power, therefore, continuous enriching and enlarging of the reading vocabulary and increasing clarity of discrimination in appreciation of word values" (p. 7). Davis (1942) presented evidence that comprehension comprises two "skills," word knowledge or vocabulary and reasoning. Vocabulary occupies an important position in learning to read. "As a learner begins to read, reading vocabulary encountered in texts is mapped on to the oral vocabulary the learner brings to the task. The reader learns to translate the (relatively) unfamiliar words in print into speech, with the expectation that the speech forms will be easier to comprehend" (p. 76).

Comprehension

Durkin (1993) defines reading comprehension as "intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader" (p. 76). Further, reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that cannot be understood without a clear description of the role that vocabulary development and vocabulary instruction play in the understanding of text. Also, comprehension is an active process that requires intentional and thoughtful interactions between reader and text.

Regardless of reading mastery level, there are times when even the best readers have difficulty understanding a text. For the struggling reader, all reading presents difficulty. Comprehension difficulties arise for many reasons; sometimes it may simply be that the reader and the author are not compatible. A reader may be unable to grasp the meaning of a given text because the vocabulary choices are unfamiliar or the sentence structures prove too complex for the reader's comfort. Another hindrance to comprehension may be that the text addresses ideas far removed from the reader's prior experiences; perhaps the reader is not interested in the

subject matter at all. “For learning to occur, new information must be integrated with what the learner already knows” (Smith, 1997, p.2). Students should be offered a connection current life experience and the appropriate text. Research further advocates the importance of pre-reading activity as an aid to comprehension (Kueker, 1990).

Some students are successful in reading until they are faced with reading more content-driven subjects, such as science and social studies texts. As adolescents enter the middle school grades, the demands of expository text increase. While these students may have been comfortable with narrative text, they now find themselves struggling with the unfamiliar overall structure of expository text. This new challenge can become particularly daunting for the struggling reader who is already behind and experiencing helplessness or failure. Provides opportunities to read a variety of texts, as well as some direct instruction about the structure of expository text, are ways to accommodate students in reading comprehension. For many students, comprehension difficulties are more specific. Difficulties may stem from a student’s lack of reading purpose: without meaning there is no reading. Other comprehension problems may arise when students are asked to think critically or make inferences about the text. In both instances, direct instruction and modeling may be beneficial teaching methods.

Struggling readers are in need of reading strategies and skills to assist them in obtaining the necessary information for academic success. The skills involved can include reading real words in isolation or in context, reading pseudowords that can be pronounced but have no meaning, reading text aloud or silently, and comprehending text that is read silently or orally (National Institute of Literacy, 2000).

From the middle elementary years through the remainder of their academic careers, students spend much of their lives, learning information presented in text. Text may refer to

anything from school books to loan or job applications to recipes. Building language skills is essential to life and students must be afforded every opportunity to gain knowledge necessary to function in society. "Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both the latter should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent" (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 7).

Fluency

According to Rasinski (1989), fluency is "the smooth and natural oral production of written text" (p. 692). May (1998) defines fluency as not mere speed, but the ability to follow the writer's message with reading in natural-sounding phrases (p. 34). Fluent readers interact with the text, constantly predicting what words are going to come next. They yearn to read on to see if their hypothesis was correct. This is not so with the struggling reader. When struggling readers are experiencing problems with fluency, the oral reading is hesitant, faltering, and choppy. If text is read in a laborious and inefficient manner, it will be difficult for the student to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her prior knowledge. Comprehension is affected as the writer's intent is lost in the reader's lack of flow from one thought to the next. Ignored punctuation blurs the true meaningfulness of the words on the page. Words read one-by-one without inflection, punctuation or logical links made between them inhibit the reader's ability to ascertain the intention of the author. Other times, substituted words disrupt or change the meaning of the passage. Insertions, omissions, and mispronunciations also inhibit fluency. Nonfluent readers exhibit very little expression in their oral reading; their intonation does not reflect the meaning of the text.

If the word recognition task is difficult, all available cognitive resources may be consumed by the decoding task, leaving little or no capacity for interpretation. Consequently, for the nonfluent reader, difficulty with word recognition slows down the meaning construction process and takes up valuable resources that are necessary for comprehension. Reading becomes a slow, labor-intensive task that only fitfully results in understanding.

The automaticity theory (LaBerge & Samuel, 1974), the idea that the comprehension abilities of nonfluent readers' is affected by the amount of time and attention that they spend decoding words, implies that the stopping and starting and disconnected manner of pronouncing words hampers the reader's ability to comprehend the text. Fluent readers, on the other hand, spend less time decoding because they recognize words automatically; this allows them to concentrate on meaning. Reutzel and Cooter (1999) describe the fluent reader as one who reads accurately, naturally and with relative ease. Fluent readers are able to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Struggling readers labor intensively to "get the words right" and therefore tend to miss the meaning of the text. Fluency is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. Despite its importance as a component of skilled reading, fluency is often neglected in the classroom. This is unfortunate. Rasinski (1989) notes that repetition is the key to fluency, and requires practice with a text until a mastery of the language level is met. Although repetition may seem to be tedious and uninviting, Rasinkski (1989) recommends that educators use the established classroom events to integrate repeated readings of text.

Many of the strategies that promote fluency also have a positive effect on motivation. Repetitious reading and following along as others read can assist struggling readers in increasing their word knowledge and, as a result, comprehension of the text. Students build confidence as

they track their progress, hear themselves individually or as part of group, and read with expression and intonation. This heightened confidence may encourage further reading. These strategies empower struggling readers with tools to improve their fluency and, in turn, their ability to communicate and to understand the written word.

Recent research on the efficacy of certain approaches to teaching fluency has led to increased recognition of its importance in the classroom and to changes in instructional practices. Guided repeated oral reading procedures that include assistance from teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels. Literally hundreds of correlational studies find that the best readers read the most and that poor readers read the least. These correlational studies suggest that the more children read, the more their fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills improve (National Institute for Literacy, 2000). Students who do not develop reading fluency, no matter how bright they are, will continue to read slowly and with great effort.

Motivation and Opportunities

It is important that students be offered a variety of opportunities to read and discuss materials relevant to their lives. The traditional view of the 3 R's is antiquated – replaced by the need for academics to be situated in the context of the students' world. If the curriculum offered in the classroom is of no perceived relevance to the students' lives, why should they invest time and energy in class studies? "If we don't pay attention to what motivates youth, we will lose more students than we will save" (Sagor, 2002, p. 36). Students are often accused of being unmotivated or uninterested in learning. The fault may not lie within the hearts of students as much as it may be found in the heart of the classroom. Students are quite successful at learning lyrics, video games, sports, and hobbies. Why, then, is there such a decline in their

learning in the classroom? The answer may be that the materials used in the academic setting are out of date, boring, or far removed from their lives.

> Another potent source of motivation for middle school students is curriculum and instruction that relates to their current interests, connects well to future educational and occupational goals, features intrinsically interesting higher-order learning tasks, and offers leeway for social interaction, student initiative, creative expression, and active participation in the learning activity. (MacIver & Plank, 2001, p.2)

Limiting educational programming and generic texts offers little contribution to immediate connections with students' lives and interests. "Students' courses are seldom instrumentally motivating because they are not obviously related to preparation for future goals and aspirations" (MacIver & Plank, 2001, p.2). By incorporating real life-application materials into the curriculum, educators demonstrate within the lesson the power of the knowledge that students already possess, as well as the relevant utility of the information and skills offered in the classroom.

Lehr and Lange (2000) conducted a study documenting the characteristics of four successful Minnesota alternative schools which specifically address the needs of struggling students. Participants included 66 students and 48 teachers. Eight focus groups were conducted finding that teacher flexibility with school policies, credits, coursework, and scheduling combined with students' genuine feelings of belonging and ownership offered students the opportunity to academically and socially succeed. The significance of building relationships with teachers as mentors surfaced repeatedly. Engaging students in activities promoting participation, independence, citizenship, literacy, and social adjustment offered the students an opportunity to feel satisfaction and success.

Providing links between the classroom and the real world may accelerate the motivation of students to become more involved in their own educational growth. "Middle school students

need to experience regular success at challenging academic tasks in order to develop confidence in their ability. Virtually every cognitive theory of motivation suggests that changes in ability perceptions can lead to dramatic changes in effort" (MacIver & Plank, 2001, p. 2). Teachers must offer materials that directly affect the child's life.

The Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Paideia Community Academy is a magnet school in Chicago that serves a population of poor and minority students. The philosophy of the school is based upon Mortimer Adler's *The Paideia Proposal*, using three types of complementary instruction: didactic teaching of information, coaching of intellectual skills, and seminar discussion of ideas and values. The focus of the educational program is to actively engage students with an idea or an exercise that is immediately relevant to them as human beings. Based on program presentations, students participate in reading, thinking, discussing, and listening to ideas that are important to them. "Students learn to care deeply about ideas in the seminar because they can make those ideas their own" (Roberts, 2002, p. 46). Through the implementation of the Paideia program, students learn to define themselves as part of a community, including thinking and speaking for themselves, demonstrate diplomacy, critically think about current issues, and understand the link between education and life. Many of these struggling middle school students were once viewed as unable to succeed in society. Now they are actively reading and learning, successfully competed in the academic community. Their 'lessons' were not learned from the standard issue text, but from real life.

Diane Curtis (2002) discussed the role of learning and student motivation in her article *The Power of Projects.* She contended that students make connections among math, social studies, literature and science when allowed to engage in "projects" based upon student interests. University of Alberta Professor Sylvia Chard, a noted project expert, defines a project as "an in-

depth investigation of a real-world topic worthy of children's attention and effort" (2001). Curtis (2002) elaborates on the academic successes of middle school students who mastered the curriculum by becoming hands-on participants in the community. Students visited construction sites, food processing plants, plant nurseries, and restaurants. At each project site, the students were active participants in the process, incorporating content skills with the duties of the project. Though first hand interaction, the students recognized and embraced learning. One of the students describes his experience as follows: "Doing projects teaches you more because you get to experiment and understand how things work. It will be stored in your brain longer. And if it is funner, you'll learn faster" (Curtis, 2002, p.52).

Providing the tools for being involved citizens is certainly as important as mastering the skills deemed necessary by the State Department of Education. Educators must link the classroom requirements to "life skills."

> Futhermore, there is considerable empirical evidence to support the proposition that any event that enhances students' self-concepts of ability in their schoolwork will also enhance their intrinsic motivation on academic tasks. Unfortunately many poor and minority adolescents find it difficult to develop confidence in their academic ability because they experience little or no genuine academic success – instead, they encounter low grades, little recognition for their learning, teacher disrespect for their potential, an insulting, "dumbed-down" curriculum and ineffective instruction, course failures, and grade retention" (MacIver & Plank, 2001, p.2).

It is not necessary to "dumb-down" the curriculum for our students. "[Ron] Edmonds showed that high student achievement correlated strongly with strong administrative leadership, high expectations for student achievement, and orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, an emphasis on basic skill acquisition, and frequent monitoring of student progress" (Cawelti, 2003, p. 19). Struggling students need teachers with high expectations who are willing to demonstrate the link between academics and life. Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) gave rise to the recognition that children construct knowledge through the ways in which they adapt to their

environment. Skills must be offered to demonstrate that the school curriculum directly impacts life – not just for the present, but for a *life*time.

Assessment

One of the dampers to motivation is inappropriate or meaningless assessment. Today, assessments have become a necessary part of the educational system. When appropriately applied to the academic setting, assessments can provide an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of students, allowing teachers to design lessons addressing areas of concern. "The assessments best suited to guide improvements in student learning are the quizzes, tests, writing assignments and other assessments that teachers administer on a regular basis in the classroom" (Guskey, 2003), p. 7). These evaluative results, because of their direct relationship with the classroom content, provide the teacher with immediate information reflecting the success of the instructional goals. For struggling readers, however, assessments become an instrument of fear. Testing can cause students "to turn off, tune out, and often drop out" (Neill, 2003, p. 43).

Struggling students at the middle school level have already experienced the anxiety of testing and the demoralization of poor grades. How many times have students spent hours of preparing for an assessment, only to discover that the material studied was different from that required by the test? Students begin to feel that hard work does not pay off (Guskey, 2003). They also begin to distrust the teacher. "As a result, students come to regard assessments as guessing games, especially from the middle grades on. They view success as depending on how well they can guess what their teachers will ask on quizzes, tests, and other assessments" (Guskey, 2003, p. 8). Traditionally teachers teach and then test; then the class moves on, leaving the struggling students behind. "This assessment model is founded on two outdated beliefs: that to increase learning we should increase anxiety and that comparison with more successful peers

will motivate low performers to do better" (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002, p. 40). Struggling readers need more than a grade on an assignment. Black and Wiliam (1998) suggest that teachers replace such judgmental feedback with specific, descriptive, and immediate feedback. All students want to know what they are doing "right." For struggling students, acknowledging any success is paramount. Open discussions allowing students to voice their opinions and perceptions of the text builds greater understanding of the materials as well as a means of assessment for the teacher. Struggling readers need to engage in dialogue and receive positive recognition for their participation. Through such means, students obtain meaningful information and the related assessments then reflect the concepts and skills that the teacher emphasized in the class, along with the teacher's clear criteria for judging students' performance.

Another misconception of assessment for struggling readers, is that the reassigning of unmastered tasks does not require reteaching the students. "Teachers who ask students to complete corrective work independently, outside of class, generally find that those students who most need to spend time on corrective work are the least likely to do so" (Guskey, 2003, p. 9). Without proper encouragement and direction, struggling students are more likely to give up (Sagor, 1999; Guskey, 2003; Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Once students give up, feeling unable to perform at grade level, they situate themselves in a position to fail and are ultimately more likely to drop out of school (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999).

Conclusion

"Struggling readers, like good readers, stand in relation to the wider culture" (Alverman, 2001, p. 683), and this has led to the development of more research and new methodologies designed for and directed toward students who are falling behind. Every child can learn and should have the opportunity afforded to all, regardless of their starting point. "Adolescents who

struggle with reading are part of the same cloth from which good readers come. Neither group stands alone in opposition to the other; both are bound up in the cultural contexts they inhabit" (Alverman, 2001, p. 683).

Our society depends on the future of our students. Struggling readers need to discover the connection between academia and their futures. Their need to move forward in the classroom is a valid and necessary one. Opportunities for these students to master the skills necessary for grade promotion depend in great part on instructors' ability to provide the appropriate instruction, process and context for struggling students to rise to the challenge and increase their abilities. Fluency, word recognition, language comprehension and, most of all, success can be afforded to all students. The challenge does not rest solely on the students but the educational community – students and educators alike.

CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The increasing need for "soft" research, dictated by societal ills, sociological inquiry and human nature, has necessitated that research paradigms shift to reveal a more three-dimensional view of our world. "The chief differences between quantitative and qualitative designs and analysis can be accounted for in terms of the questions of interest and their place within a complex web of background knowledge" (Howe, 1988, p. 12). Qualitative and quantitative studies provide different kinds of information. Both are valuable and contribute to understanding while simultaneously studying in the same arena, yet they emphasize different aspects.

Regardless of the data collected, the research must be verified as true and accurate. Why should one accept the findings, observations, and conclusions of the research? What will be learned from this research that will contribute to future field studies? "To achieve a fuller or more satisfying way of understanding a phenomenon, one would want to entertain a number of different views rather than only one" (Salomon, 1991, p. 16). The growing interest in social sciences and humanistic areas of research require a method for evaluation that has become more phenomenological and interpretive in nature.

When qualitative research was first introduced, it was regarded as "soft" research. This form of research included the gathering of descriptions of people and places, collections of conversations and observations, and evaluations based upon social reactions incorporating values, beliefs and intentions. Those interested in the study of social sciences called for a research methodology that could be used outside of the laboratory or researcher-controlled setting. Academic fields such as sociology, history and anthropology study data that could not be

contained in laboratories, data that flowed in the everyday worlds of society. Data collection moved from counts, measures, and codes, to photographs, conversations, and everyday life.

Quantitative research maintains the ontological view that there is only one reality, whereas qualitative research adopts the view of multiple realities. With this axiom alone, contentious disagreements occur. Qualitative researchers are not concerned with one "right" answer but are looking for possibilities.

The qualitative researcher strives to understand the "why" or "how" of the event, and becomes immersed in the study, striving to become an insider of sorts. When a research study dismisses outside influences, substantial implications may be disregarded. Some of the better research findings have been uncovered due merely to human curiosity.

"Unfortunately, the disabled reader has often been so removed from reading as a tool for living and learning, that he or she has given up" (Collins, 1996, p. 2). When educators connect the classroom reading curriculum with personal links, students are able to recognize that reading is not just for learning in the classroom, but a tool to better survive in the world in which they live.

Pilot Study

Observations were conducted in the target school from January through March of 2002. Field notes were gathered two or three mornings a week for a period of 90 minutes each session observing an eighth grade reading classroom and assisting with students who have difficulty with reading comprehension. This opportunity afforded the researcher to become familiar with the population and routine of the school, as well as offered opportunities to informally evaluate the academic needs in the reading classroom. The school community also became accustomed to outside observers.

The researcher was asked by the classroom teacher and the guidance counselor to obtain reading level data on eight students. After administering the Slossons Intelligence Test, the Slossons Oral Reading Test and the Classroom Reading Inventory, it was determined that the reading levels of the students ranged from 1.2 – 7.4. Through my discussions with Dr. French, my observations and my evaluations of oral reading, my observations of the students, responses to comprehension questions and of classroom discussions, I found that many of the students have had limited exposure to print outside of the classroom. Relatedly, it was also learned that the majority of them had little reading material in the home. An evaluation of the students revealed that the majority of the students did not possess the skills necessary for them to fully benefit from the materials offered at their grade level.

These experiences provided valuable preparation for the research project. Although observers are still viewed as outsiders, participation on the campus provided valuable insight with regard to the expectations of not only Dr. French and the faculty and staff but of the students as well.

Research Design

The researcher determined the case study with both pretest and posttest data collection to be the best method for investigating this problem. According to Yin (1990), the most significant condition for differentiating among the numerous research strategies is to identify the type of research questions being asked. How and why questions call for the use of case studies. Also, when the researcher cannot control or manipulate relevant behavioral events, the case study is preferred. Yin (1981) defines the case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 97).

The case study is a category of qualitative research. Patton (1990) states that qualitative research methods are appropriate when decision-makers are "interested in elucidating and understanding the internal dynamics of programs – program strengths, program weaknesses, and overall program processes" (p. 88-89). He further states that qualitative methods are needed when program staff is interested in collecting of detailed descriptive information about the program for the purpose of improving the program or for formative evaluation.

The focuses of the study were the motivational, or attitudinal, and academic impacts of incorporating Life- Application Learning, or "real life," reading situations into an already established curriculum guide. The first question explored was:

1. How did incorporating life-application learning into the middle school curriculum impact reading motivation of the participating students?

The purpose of the first question was to explore the possibility that change could occur when the students realized how much reading occurs on a daily basis outside of the classroom. Qualitative research procedures assisted in the discovery by investigating the "voice" of the students. Self-report journals, questionnaires, and attitude and interest surveys combined with the researchers' observations provided documentation of the students' exploration of their attitudes about reading.

The second question explored was:

2. How did incorporating life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impact the reading levels of the participating students?

Question two directly examined the effect on students' reading levels when exposed to reading materials more directly related to their lives. Did the evidence gathered in the study suggest that the integration of life application materials into the standard curriculum increased students' reading levels? By employing a pretest and posttest instrument to measure the students' reading abilities the impact were ascertained.

The study was a descriptive case study conducted with participants who are in an eighth grade classroom. The study used qualitative research methods as well as made use of a quantitative component that was designed to compare but not submitted to be statistically analyzed, pre- and post test data. The three evaluative instruments used as pretest and posttest measurements were the Interest and Attitude Inventory, the Reading Usefulness Evaluation, and the Classroom Reading Inventory.

Selection of Participants

In selecting the students for the study, the technique of purposeful sampling, "a sample from which once can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p. 48), which fits a set of criteria was used. Criteria for selection included cases that were extreme or typical, had maximum variation, were politically important or sensitive, or were convenient. In order to maximize the potential for learning about the attitudes of the students, the following criteria for choosing participants were identified: (a) the students agreed, and the parents consented, to participation in the study; (b) these students were among the lowest achievers in reading in the classroom, and (c) students were representative of the school population.

Throughout the study, student privacy was strictly upheld, by using pseudonyms and student identification numbers to identify their work. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1997), two issues dominate human research guidelines,

1. The subject enters research projects voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved.
2. Subjects are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive (p. 43).

Keeping these guidelines at the forefront of planning, particular care was given to private settings and careful monitoring of all written submissions of each subject involved in the study.

Respecting the nature of a research study, Dr. French willingly offered her assistance with any materials necessary. She provided her lesson plans, student assessments from standardized tests, and her anecdotal records involving the student participants. Because she is a reading specialist and holds a doctoral degree in reading, her knowledge, wisdom, and experience will provide invaluable insight into this project.

The student participants were drawn from an eighth grade reading class of 36. There are currently 21 males and 15 females in this class. All students in the class are African American. Approximately 17% of the students have been retained at least one year during their academic careers. Eight students will be chosen to participate in this study. Each participant was selected by Dr. French based upon his or her performance in the reading classroom.

Data Collection

The best way to discover what students think or to diagnose where they are having difficulties in reading – which, aside from accountability and placement, is the main reason for testing – is to give them as much reign as possible to express themselves fully (Archbald & Newman, 1988), and to assess their learning in its natural context as they make active use of their skills. Traditionally, assessment has been derived from the curriculum; however, assessment has not been a part of a feedback loop linked to instruction. It is now widely believed

that assessment must be an integral part of teaching, so that it is used as a tool not merely to collect data, but also to influence instruction (Pandey, 1990). Many educators have come to recognize that alternative assessments are an important means of gaining a dynamic picture of students' academic and linguistic development. "Alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom" (Hamayan, 1995).

The pressure to demonstrate effectiveness through students' performances on standardized tests not only changes how teachers teach and what the children study, but also seems to be changing our understanding of learning and achievement (Hill, 1993). Performance assessment, however, has been designed to offer a new approach that documents activities in which students engage on a daily basis. This type of assessment allows the teacher multiple opportunities to evaluate and reevaluate a student at various times. It is flexible enough to reflect individual academic achievement and designed to evaluate many elements of learning and development not captured by standardized tests.

Initial Procedures

The research timeline and procedure for data collection and analysis are presented in Appendix A. Letters requesting permission were sent to the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (Appendix B), the school principal (Appendix D), and the classroom teacher (Appendix F). Students were given consent and assent forms (Appendix H and I) as well as the students' parents or caregivers (Appendix J and K).

In adherence with The Belmont Report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research (1979), the LSU/PBUC: Human Research Subjects application for exemption (Appendix L) will be submitted for approval.

Initial Evaluations

Interest and Attitude Inventory

For this study, the interest and attitude inventory (Appendix M) created by Earl Cheek, Ph.D. and Martha Collins, Ph.D. was utilized for the purpose of gathering information about participants. "During the period when the assessment information is obtained, the teacher gains valuable insights into the student's personality, attitude, value system, peer relationships, and perhaps to some extent, cultural and environmental factors that affect a student's performance in reading" (Cheek & Collins, 2000, p. 107). By asking a few simple questions, an instructor can easily obtain superficial information about what the students know concerning a specific topic. Although completing an inventory on each student does require some time and organization in the beginning, it allows for a greater awareness of what each student's present needs are. Armed with this knowledge, teachers can establish techniques to connect the students with the topic at hand.

"Because students at the middle and secondary level are required to use textbooks, it is important for them to see what reading informational books have to offer. By browsing a variety of books and scanning them for something they want to know about, readers see the usefulness of reading" (Collins, 1996, p.4). How can reading a history text or a science text directly touch the lives of students? There has to be a link between the life of the students and the content of the textbook. "If students have a problem reading or comprehending the text we have assigned, it is our [teachers'] job to assist them" (Sadler, 2001, p. 178). One way to assist students is to investigate the students' interests and attitudes.

There are a number of interest and attitude inventories available. An inventory of this nature is defined as a catalog or list for assessing the absence or presence of certain attitudes, or

interests, behaviors, or other items regarded as relevant to a given purpose. "Inventories and questionnaires are the simplest and most direct way of acquiring information about students' skills, interests, attitudes, and belief systems" (Bronzo & Simpson, p. 146). Engel (1990, p. 128-129) endorses the use of descriptive inventories, which summarize learning in a particular curriculum area. Inventories are a way to monitor what is happening with a child rather than prescribing what should happen. A literacy inventory is made up of items that, taken together, form an overall view of a child's literacy attainments. The assessment of interests through the use of interest inventories is essential to link students' interests with education (Collins & Cheek, 2000). The definition of interest, as used by inventory developers, researchers and counselors, typically reflects five components that may be characterized as determinants: personality, motivation or drive, expression of self-concept or identification, heritability, and environmental influences (Hansen, 1987).

After assessing the students' interests and attitudes, reading materials congruent with the students' interests were recommended and/or assigned. Fuchs (1987) suggests, "as a first step, that teachers select books for young people that reflect the actual interests of adolescents" (p.5). Demonstrating usefulness and relatedness for the materials learned reiterates the benefit for mastering the skill. "Research findings indicate that both good and poor readers perform significantly better on high interest as compared with low interest materials" (Fink, 1998, p.389). Allington (2000) supports this idea saying that "as we read we make connections between personal experiences and the text -- even with informational texts. When we talk about what we've read the text-to-self connections just naturally appear" (p. 89). In keeping with the research, one may conclude that higher reading achievement for struggling readers can be

obtained by choosing materials that pertain to their lives and connect with their prior experiences.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

After the Reading Interest and Attitude Inventory, each student completed the Reading Usefulness Evaluation, employing the Likert scale, developed by the researcher (Appendix N). The Likert technique presents a set of attitude statements. The Reading Usefulness Evaluation was administered to the remaining 20 members of the class from which the eight participants in the study were selected. A pre- and post-test procedure was used to ensure a degree of reliability of the Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Appendix O). The reliability of The Reading Usefulness Evaluation has a reliability of 86%. The Evaluation consists of 20 questions. Twenty students responded. Of the 400 total questions answered, 47 (12%) varied by 1 and 9 (2%) varied by two or more degrees of agreement.

Subjects were asked to express agreement or disagreement in a five-point scale. Each degree of agreement is given a numerical value from one to five indicating the extent of feeling the subject has about the idea in question. Thus a total numerical value can be calculated from all of the responses. Collins and Cheek (2000) suggest that a Likert scale may be used with older students such as the participants in this study.

Assuming that people's attitudes can be explored, it seems that attitudes work best as predictors of behavior when the attitudes are strong and consistent; when they are based on and related to personal experience; and when they are specifically related to the behavior being predicted. Attitudes which are based on personal experience are much better predictors of behavior than attitudes which have come from simply reading or hearing about an issue. It is

also much more likely to be the case that people will act on their attitudes toward an issue if that issue is likely to have a direct effect on them (Dewey, 1916; Langer, 1997).

Classroom Reading Inventory

In addition, the Classroom Reading Inventory (CRI), (Appendix P) which is a published informal reading inventory, was administered. Through content area inventories educators and researchers can "determine to what extent students [can] use their text as a resource and comprehend and process the textual information at a meaningful level" (Bonzo & Simpson, 2003, p. 139). The CRI is an individual diagnostic reading test providing information to teachers, and researchers, that will enable them to identify a student's reading skills or abilities or both and make instructional decisions (Silvaroli & Wheelock, 2001). It is an informal reading inventory which "enables the teacher [researcher] to diagnose a student's ability to decode words (word recognition) both in isolation and in context and to answer questions (comprehension)" (Silvaroli & Wheelock, 2001, p. 3).

The CRI has been specifically designed for effective assessment without requiring excessive amounts of time. The evaluation is easy to use and can be administered in fifteen minutes or less. Assessment procedures include subskills as well as a reader response format incorporating the predicting and retelling of stories. Reading comprehension, word-recognition, inferential and critical reading, and thinking abilities can be evaluated. Inventories help identify students' reading problems and can be used to continually monitor students. Identifying deficiencies in a student's reading skills through such a tool assists in providing guidelines for creating an individualized plan for a struggling student. The CRI pretest and posttest will be one indicator of the progress of the individual student's achievement.

Program of Reading Instruction with Life-Application Materials

The researcher removed the students from the reading classroom and taught them in an isolated environment. During the eight week study the students only received reading instruction from the researcher. Each session consisted of 90 minutes. The sessions occurred two or three times a week, on A Day, in accordance with the block scheduling. Lesson plans are included in Appendix Q .

During these eight weeks, a program of reading instruction was implemented which included life-application, or "real life," reading methods and materials designed in conjunction with Dr. French's lesson plans and which complied with the East Baton Rouge Parish Schools curriculum standards. The students completed the same tests and the same graded assignments as those students in Dr. French's class.

The purpose of including the life-application materials was to link the necessity of reading in the "real world" to the academic pursuits of classroom reading instruction. The goal was to demonstrate to the students that reading is not just for school success but for every day success in living. Materials integrated into the state mandated curriculum included current newspapers, magazines, medication labels, job applications, recipes and instruction booklets for video games. Activities such as reading aloud, group activities, research, internet exploration, and creating publications were used to demonstrate the connectedness of reading to the students' lives outside of the classroom.

Activities and reading materials were chosen, in part, based upon the students' responses to the Reading Interest and Attitude Inventory. Students were encouraged to suggest additional materials of interest complementary to the skills and text specified by the curriculum guidelines.

Student responses to the Life Application Learning lessons and its immediate relevance were gathered by the researcher in the forms of interviews, written responses, classroom discussion and researcher observation. The level of motivation to participate in reading was evaluated by the researcher through ongoing interviews, responses and observations as well as the student's level of reading improvement and the change, if any, in his or her desire to read.

A test monitor was present at appropriate times. The monitor submitted signed documentation stating that the researcher complied with the plan of study and did not manipulate or alter the study (Appendix R).

On-going Evaluation

Journals

Each student submitted journal entries. The information written in the journals was in direct response to activities conducted throughout the study. Students were asked to expound upon their experiences using "real life" applications in connection with the established curriculum guide and the traditional methods of instruction. Weekly journal questions are listed in Appendix S).

The accepted standard for a journal, or personal document, is that it reveals a person's view of his or her experiences (Allport, 1942). Journals also provide an opportunity for teachers to learn more about students' interests and their understanding of the text read (Collins & Cheek, 2000). These journal entries provided the student "with an opportunity to personalize skill aspects of their learning in a contextualized and systematic fashion" (Lesley, 2001, p. 184). Additionally, "journal entries offer important messages that suggest interests and feeling about reading that can be addressed through related learning activities" (Collins & Cheek, 2000, p. 39). Because the journals entries were labeled according to activity, the researcher was able to

evaluate each student's response to the activity and to the skill of reading. An added benefit to this particular instrument of data collection was that writing can be used to "strengthen processes of reading, critical thinking, and learning" (Lesley, 2002, p. 182) and questioning the materials. "The aim of collecting such materials was to "obtain detailed evidence as to how social situations appear to actors in them and what meanings various factors have for participants" (Angell, 1945, p. 178)" (Bogdan & Biklin, 1997, p. 134).

Researcher Observations

The researcher observed the students as they participated in the Life-Application Instructional Learning Program method. Involvement, participation, interests, attitudes and motivation were recorded. Observational assessment is an excellent source for the critical information that the researcher needs. Assessing and evaluating through observation requires that one become more sensitive to the instructional situation, or in this case, the research project: the participant, the text, the tasks required of the participant, and the processes needed to complete the tasks. Assessments were conducted as students interacted with text and completed daily assignments, engaged in class discussions, or worked as a group to solve problems. Those observations provided a rich source of information about students' relative strengths and needs, as well as how instruction can be modified to facilitate learning (Valencia & Wixson, 2000).

Final Evaluation

After eight weeks of the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program, students were retested using the Reading Interest and Attitude Inventory, Reading Usefulness Evaluation, and the Classroom Reading Inventory. The scores of the pretests and the posttests along with the researcher observations and student journals, were evaluated to determine whether or not the

Life- Application Learning Instructional Program methods impacted the students the students' motivation to read and the students' ability to read.

Interpretation of Results

The interpretation of the results incorporated qualitative descriptive research methods. Information pertaining to the analysis for each research question is provided.

How has the incorporation of life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impacted reading motivation of the participating students? A comparison of the responses to the initial Interest and Attitude Inventory and the Reading Usefulness Evaluation with the results of the surveys completed at the end of the eight weeks, and an examination of changes in the amount of reading students utilized for pleasure and for information suggest that their motivation for learning has increased. A change in the students' comprehension of reading materials also demonstrated that the participants motivation to read has increased. Student interviews, written responses and participant observations were also evaluated. The evidence suggested that the participants demonstrated a greater interest in reading and that a change occurred due to the incorporation of "real life" materials. Additionally, an interview with the classroom teacher provided yet another perspective on what changes may have occurred during the eight-week study.

How has the incorporation of life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impacted the reading levels of the participating students? A comparison between the Classroom Reading Inventory pre- and posttest scores revealed that positive changes occurred on the selected reading assessment tools in the overall reading levels of the eight participants in the study.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

A quiet crisis pervades our middle school classrooms. This crisis focuses on the reading abilities and attitudes of adolescent students centering on the fact that many have difficulty dealing with academic texts with respect to the range of reading materials students are expected to read and comprehend at the middle school level. Curriculum designs such as the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program demonstrate considerable differences in older students' reading abilities and attitudes can occur. It is not too late for these students to come to think of themselves as able readers, capable of employing books, articles, and other texts for formal, assigned learning and perhaps just as important, capable of using written materials of all kinds for learning on their own and for entertainment.

When faced with students' resistance to reading or difficulty in comprehending course materials, teachers become frustrated and respond in a variety of ways. Attempting to alter teaching strategies, educators often times find themselves assigning more 'skill and drill' more homework. In some cases, teachers give up on struggling readers in the class feeling the pressure to cover the curriculum. At the same time, struggling readers are making adjustments of their own.

Often struggling readers avoid the reading tasks all together, waiting for the teacher to tell them what they should know. Students who have come to think of themselves as nonreaders or poor readers develop various survival strategies including becoming 'invisible,' acting out, or creating distractions when they fear their inadequacies will be exposed. Still others assume the façade that they don't care at all. However, there are those few who are dedicated to painfully struggle to get through the assigned text.

Struggling readers are far less likely to have problems with decoding than with comprehension, unfamiliar vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, reading fluency, or engagement (Alverman & Moore, 1991). Often when low-skilled readers are identified, the general remedy has been to send them back to the beginning of reading instruction. This solution only helps to reinforce their misconception that reading is just saying the words. This response does nothing to help students understand or use the complex comprehension processes and the knowledge about reading. The focus of the intervention should address the knowledge and cognitive resources that adolescents already use constantly in their lives beyond the classroom.

The life experiences of adolescents, particularly those visible in their behaviors and language, offer a wealth of resources that can give them strategic control over reading comprehension. When provided with alternative means of accessing the ideas and contents of the curriculum students discover that many of the skills assigned in the classroom are the skills necessary to accomplish daily tasks like singing, playing sports, driving, cooking, surfing the internet, or keeping up with heroes, styles and fashion.

In keeping with this theory, the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program was founded. The philosophy of the program provides the incorporation of 'real life' reading materials with the traditional classroom lesson plans. The two questions driving the study were:

1. How will incorporating life-application learning into the middle school curriculum impact reading motivation of the participating students?
2. How will incorporating life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impact the reading levels of the participating students?

The weekly summaries provided below demonstrate the integration of life-application learning instructional methods with the existing lesson plans.

Weekly Summary

Dr. French provided a copy of her weekly lesson plans and materials. After the established goals and objectives for the week were assessed, life-application learning components were added to the lesson plan. The following weekly synopses encapsulate the integration of a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program.

Week 0

On Monday, the researcher met with the eight previously selected eighth grade participants. The research project and each evaluative tool was explained and discussed at length. All candidates voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Consent and assent forms were given to each participant and each participant's parents. Tuesday the signed forms were returned and a copy was given to each participant and each participant's parent. Tuesday through Friday the researcher administered the Reading Interest and Attitude Survey, the Classroom Reading Inventory, and the Reading Usefulness Evaluation to each participant.

Week 1

The researcher, following the lesson objectives established by the classroom teacher, began employing the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program (LALIP). On Monday of Week 1, students were assigned a writing assignment addressing extreme sports. Participants in the LALIP study researched various extreme sports using multiple sources including Sports Illustrated, Sports Illustrated for Kids, newspapers, and the internet. The research linked the participants to pictures, celebrities, and techniques used to develop the skills necessary to

participate in each event. Students identified and outlined the sequence of events, or work out plan, required to reach the goals of the sports.

Wednesday and Friday participants identified and defined 10 vocabulary words used in the novel *High Elk's Treasure*, an assigned reading. Students predicted how the words would be used in the text developing examples of the word in conjunction to their own lives and forming sentences demonstrating understand of the meaning. Students further explored the meanings of the vocabulary and the theme of the novel, by investigating the Native American heritage in their region, and predicting events in the novel.

The students completed the journal entry for Week 1, "Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?"

Week 2

On Tuesday and Thursday the researcher and the participants read the first and second chapters of the novel, comparing the thoughts and experiences of the main character, a 13-year-old boy, with their own thoughts and experiences. The participants noted the similarities and differences between themselves and the character with particular reference to family, culture, traditions, geographic regions, responsibilities, likes and dislikes. The participants discovered they could relate to the character in many ways. Through reading the novel and viewing supplementary materials, the students began to further understand the Native American culture and integrate that knowledge into their beliefs about the history of the Native Americans and how the Native American culture has helped to shape America.

In addition, participants studied analogies, exploring word play and hidden meanings of language. To further make meaning of the skill, students created their own word lists using language embedded in their own lives and cultures. They learned new vocabulary words drawn

from an assigned list and a participant created list derived from the novel, dividing them into syllables and utilizing the skills needed to pronounce words and understand the impact and meanings of various suffixes and prefixes.

Students addressed the Week 2 Journal Topic, "Is reading important? Why or why not?"

Week 3

On Monday, participants completed a test on analogies and syllabication. Participants reviewed chapters one and two of the novel, discussed the events, and answered questions pertaining to the assigned readings. When reviewing the novel, students read passages supporting their opinions. They paraphrased events, extended answers, and outlined the sequence of events. On Monday and Wednesday local Native American history was included in the discussions, linking the historical fiction to area events. On Wednesday and Friday students developed character sketches of individuals in the novel, retelling parts of the story and relating the characters' behaviors to their own, further enmeshing the participants with the reading. Character sketches were created, identifying the main characters in writing as well as artistic forms such as drawings and time lines predicting what will happen in the story. Participants created "character sketches" of themselves identifying how they would have responded had they been characters in the novel as well as elaborating on their positive character traits.

The journal topics for Week 3 were "What do you do when you are not at school? Does it require any reading? Why or why not?" and "Did studying about Native American history in your area make learning more or less interesting?"

Week 4

On Tuesday the participants completed a vocabulary test and read chapter 3 of the novel. Tuesday and Thursday participants read interviews and profiles of their favorite famous people

in current pop culture magazines. Student detected the use of propaganda techniques and inferred the author's purpose. Facts and opinions were identified, further understanding the bias and limitations of publicity. By employing publicity and interviewing techniques, participant created promotional paragraphs and interview questions using subjective and objective ideas for a character in the novel. Students were asked to include specific details as well as personal reactions allowing other members of the group to point out the differences. Through this exercise, students discovered how information could be given, or omitted, to the public and the importance of using more than one reference before making a decision. Included in this week, were activities addressing synonyms and antonyms. Participants were asked to develop a list of synonyms and antonyms, using both standard and non-standard English, demonstrating the vast number of words that can be used. The activity also served to illustrate the number of words contained in their own vocabularies. Students were amazed at the number of words they already knew.

The journal topic for Week 4 was "Is reading useful outside of school? How?"

Week 5

On Monday the students completed a Word of the Day test. Participants continued to read and discuss the novel and answer questions after each chapter. Primary focus was given figurative language, mental imagery and context clues. Reading materials were drawn from various pop culture magazines, the internet and the newspaper. Students chose various advertisements and identified the figurative language and the mental imagery conveyed by the pictures. Extending the lesson, students referred to the novel citing examples of figurative language and used the context clues to determine meaning. Wednesday and Friday students developed an Indian symbol legend and created a symbol legend about their lives, demonstrating

the use of symbolism, figurative language, and the specificity of colloquialism and cultural innuendos.

On Wednesday, students used the recipe for gumbo, originally a Creole or West Indies dish, as a basis for creating a sequence of events. Each student rewrote the recipe adding his or her favorite items. Students interviewed a parent and on Friday presented his or her new recipe describing the sequence of events and the time sequence for creating the dish.

The journal topics for Week 5 were "What would you like to read? Why?" and "Did understanding propaganda effect the way you read?"

Week 6

On Tuesday and Thursday, students read chapter four of the novel and completed comprehension questions. Based upon the facts in the chapter, students created a 'decision web' recounting the problems and concerns experienced by the main character, Joe, and the cause and effect relationship of his actions. By vicariously experiencing the situation, each student a personal reaction to Joe's decisions and suggested solutions to the problem. Students chose a current middle school concern and created a decision web comparing and contrasting the Joe's issues with their own. For the current concern web, students located facts and suggestions on the internet. The internet cites were shared with all students.

Based upon the two decision webs, each student chose on causal relationship and completed a chronological sequence detailing the event, including the time of action and specific facts.

Also on Thursday, students brought instruction manuals for their favorite electronic item. Each student summarized the directions in sequential order for the group, identifying the reasons for the particular order of steps.

The journal topics for Week 6 were "What did you read over the weekend?" and "Did researching your school concern encourage you to read more?"

Week 7

On Monday and Wednesday, students completed a comprehension test on chapters 3 and 4. The students began to read chapter 5. This chapter describes crimes being committed. Students read law related newspaper articles. Each student chose an article, researched the law and the punishment (cause and effect) and presented it to the other participants, explaining terms and application of the law.

Part of Wednesday and Friday, students chose a Native American name characterizing themselves and created an Native American mask representing the name. Students outlined the symbolism of the mask and presented his or her explanation to the class incorporating Native American terminology in the delivery.

The journal topics for Week 7 were "Have your views of reading changed?" and "How did the law activity affect your reading?"

Week 8

On Tuesday and Thursday students read Chapter 6. They chose interesting words from the chapter, used context clues to establish a definition before looking them up in the dictionary. Students then applied the same technique using pop culture magazines. Each student shared a list of 7-10 words with the group.

Students developed a story web based upon the novel, identifying the theme, the main ideas and events, and the characters. Using the new words identified in the pop culture text, students then integrated the vocabulary and concepts of the novel and the pop culture text into a creative story.

The journal topics for Week 8 were "After this program, do you think you are a better reader?" and "Did the story webs encourage you to read?"

Week 9

All participants were reevaluated using the interest and attitude inventory, the classroom reading inventory, and the Reading Usefulness Evaluation. The researcher answered questions and explained what would happen to all of the data gathered during the eight week study.

Summary of Evaluative Instruments

Interest and Attitude Inventory

During Week 0 the students each completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory. Having not yet formed the bonds of a group, the members of the study did not discuss the items on the inventory nor their impressions of the questions. The answers appeared to be truthful, yet somewhat guarded, as if the participants were unsure whether their answers would remain confidential. During each individual evaluative session, students reiterated their concerns regarding confidentiality. Each student was reaffirmed that no one else would read the responses and that participant names would be changed. They appeared to be concerned that their teacher, Dr. French, would be privy to their answers especially with regard to the questions concerning their feelings about reading.

By Week 9, the participants had become comfortable with the researcher. While responding to the inventory, participants peppered their answers with antidotes about family and friends, classroom activities, likes and dislikes about school, and life in general. The majority of the antidotes were not directly related to the inventory per se, but revealing of their personal lives.

Comparing the two sets of responses from the Interest and Attitude Inventory one may conclude that an increase in reading interest has taken place. Students professed to reading more often. A secondary benefit is the escalation of reading with family members. Michelle, Ronald, Rachel, Calvin, Samantha and, to a small degree, Daniel reported an increase in the frequency of reading to siblings.

It was during Week 9 that some participants asked each other about particular answers. Because the participants had formed a loose camaraderie, they each knew of one another's families and interests; however, they were most curious about each other's favorite and least favorite academic subjects, (item one under the School section of the inventory). Curiously, no one admitted that Dr. French's class was not the favorite! Each appeared very protective of her feelings.

Because the Attitude and Interest Inventory was the first of the concluding evaluations, students came to the realization that the study was drawing to a close. Most of the participants were disappointed that the program was over. Even though Michelle and Donald purported feelings of relief, the others loudly refused to believe their words.

Classroom Reading Inventory

The Classroom Reading Inventory was the least favorite of the evaluative instruments. In both the pretest and the posttest students complained of its length and found some of the stories to be uninteresting. It was this instrument that appeared to create the most anxiety. As the word lists and passages grew more difficult, each participant appeared to become more uncomfortable.

During the pretest in Week 0, several of the participants inquired as to the effects of their scores on the Inventory. 'Did it affect their grade?' 'Did someone at the school think they were stupid?' 'Why do we have to do this one?' It appeared the more formal construction of the tool

indicated serious implications may follow. The suspicions of this instrument may be a result of the Special Education component of the school. Michelle, whose sister is in the Special Education program, was the most uncomfortable; perhaps for fear of being assigned there as well.

The Level 3 graded paragraph passage is a folk tale couched in a dialogue replete with colloquialisms that Ronald succinctly dubbed 'country redneck.' The unfamiliar language and events in the story were foreign posing difficulty in reading and comprehension. Samantha, Calvin, Michelle, Ronald, and Rachel asked for various explanations concerning the individuals in the story. They wanted to know where they lived; if people in our area talked like that; or why the son called his father "Pa." Michelle said she didn't even know what a 'p – a' was. This particular passage undermined their confidence.

As the passage readability level increased all of the participants employed a form of guided or isolated reading techniques such as using a finger as a guide or a paper placed beneath the line currently being read. The majority of the student who used his or her finger as a guide moved the finger smoothly across the page. Rachel, however, pointed to each word individually.

Students appeared to have adopted a self-imposed time limit on the test disregarding the researcher's protestations to the contrary. Responses to comprehension questions were quick and random at times and thoughtful and processed at others. As the readability level increased the urgency of completion heightened as well. Students began to question the selections remaining. The participants became visually disheartened when reaching the frustration level. The researcher validated each student's efforts with praise extolling their virtues of dedication. Explaining the increase in difficulty with each new passage, the researcher appeared to assuage the students' feelings of inadequacies.

The demeanor of the students was visibly different during the posttest. Students, while remaining disenchanted with this particular instrument, responded more confidently, with more authority, than during the pretest. It was if each had to prove to him- or herself that positive strides had taken place. Even though Level 3 continued to cause hesitation, students embraced the cultural difference and carefully read the dialogue attempting to read smoothly without mistakes. All of the students demonstrated gains in the posttest.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

As with the previous two evaluation instruments, the pretest Reading Usefulness Evaluation was completed without discussion among the participants. The evaluation was given to the participants in concert. It was particularly interesting to observe the student's facial expressions when answering questions linking reading to sports, singing, or cooking. Incredulous looks at the researcher and the shaking of heads conveyed curiosity, but no one questioned the items.

At various times during the 8 weeks, students referred back to the Reading Usefulness Evaluation when commenting on the newly found connection between various life skill tasks and reading. The association between reading and cooking was the most profound revelation of them all. The necessity of cookbooks developed into an interesting conversation. Linking reading to physical activities became a challenge and a source of empowerment for them.

The posttest was again given in a group setting. This time after the evaluation was completed students discussed their answers and argued over the necessity of reading outside the school setting. While listening to the discussion, the researcher became aware of the students' tendency to rank the usefulness of the items on the evaluation as opposed to evaluating each item

in isolation. Irregardless of the ranking, the results of the posttest inferred an increase in reading usefulness in all of the participants except Donald.

Journals

The journal writing component was included as a vehicle allowing each participant to freely express themselves unimpeded by comments from the others. However, the journals were quickly perceived as a feminine activity. Rachel unintentionally laid the groundwork for the misconception. As the researcher explained the function of the journals, Rachel boasted of her journal writing expertise and proudly added, "Of course, it is really called a diary." If the male participants were tentative about the journals before, they certainly became appalled after that. Robert and Ronald conveyed their displeasure at such a task. The other males quickly agreed.

The researcher believes this exchange contributed to the brevity of the journal entries. No amount of explanation could dissuade their beliefs. "Why can't we just tell you what we think?" Robert posed. Eventually, the journal issue was settled and the males agreed to participate provided they were not assigned 'girly' topics. It was more important for them to remain in the project than to refuse to write in journals. Rachel did not mention 'diary' again.

The journal entries were brief in the beginning but grew longer as the study continued. Dr. French was consulted regarding their writing and she confirmed the suspicions that these students were rather resistant to the idea of writing. Robert's suggestion of 'telling' what they think proved to be the chosen method for conveying their opinions. By the end of the eight-week period, the journal length averaged about four sentences.

Researcher Observations

The researcher observations proved to be the most informative source of information. Although these students had gone to the same schools and had grown up in some of the same

neighborhoods, it was evident they were not close friends. They were watchful of one another and closely guarded their reading inadequacies. When offered opportunities to read aloud, participants were unsure of the responses they would receive from their peers. Initially, the researcher read aloud first before assigning students to continue with the passage. Tentatively the students acquiesced and eventually came to know that each had strengths and weakness in oral reading. The realization that they all struggled with reading provided a certain freedom for making mistakes. After this discovery, everyone appeared to relax somewhat, taking the initiative to volunteer to read and offer opinions during discussions. Through the course of the study the participants transformed from eight individuals to a loosely held team.

On occasion, participants would assist one another in pronunciation or explanation of a word or concept. When discussions were held, the researcher assumed the role of a facilitator allowing the participants to field each others questions. The empowerment of their successes appeared to grow. Through the team efforts the dynamics of the group vacillated from one leader to another depending on the topic at hand. The Life-Application Learning assignments allowed the students to apply prior knowledge validating the information they already knew while affirming the contributions to the discourse.

The researcher was witness to the participants' growing awareness of resources. Periodically an assignment called for the exploration of a particular topic. Participants began by using only one other source. Each shared his or her findings discovering they had gathered multiple sources addressing the same concept. They shared resources and pointed out materials complimentary to one another's projects. As they began to understand the wealth of resources available to them, the students more readily acquiesced when faced with a research assignment.

The participants also discovered the concepts they were learning in the reading classroom enhanced their abilities to learn more about their individual interests.

The observations rendered more than reading ability data. Peer pressure appeared to be a significant factor. Even though the participants volunteered for the position, each came to the group seeming apprehensive about the social repercussions of involvement not only from the participant population, but also from the other class members. As the other students began to view membership in the study group as a distinct privilege, the participants themselves appeared to embrace the task at hand foregoing their initial qualmishness. The 'blessing' of the peer group appeared to give the students much needed 'permission' from a most powerful authority. With that said, the prestige of the group was not without a caveat for some. The researcher was privately admonished not to comment on the hard work of Calvin and Donald. Chris made it very clear that his friends did hold intelligence in high regard. He admitted that he downplayed his involvement in the group, blaming the teacher and his parents for his role.

During the sessions, the researcher often wrote in a notebook. Even though the participants were foretold, it still disturbed the participants. At the end of Tuesday's session in Week 2, Ronald pensively requested that the researcher share what she was writing. The researcher explained the notebook was a way to record conversations and activities taking place in each session. She explained that she had not written any harsh words about any member of the group. The explanation seemed to satisfy Ronald and the rest of the participants. From then on, different participants would ask what was written about them or if one participant had made an especially salient point, he or she may ask if the researcher 'had gotten it all down.' Being in the notebook became a mark of distinction.

Not all of the observations were pleasant, however. Michelle and Ronald exhibited vision problems. Both had been previously referred for medical examination, yet no interaction from home had taken place. Michelle's resentment of her responsibilities to her mentally challenged sister pervaded her life. Calvin and Donald had no curfew, therefore they often came to school tired and unprepared. When Calvin's parents did discipline him, the method was a severe beating with a belt. Samantha's timidity appeared to prevent her from asking for clarification of assignments or points of discussion. If no one noticed her perplexed expression and intervened, she would be left unable to grasp the lesson. Antoine's learning disabilities remain unchecked by the school system, causing him to fall further behind. Robert's abhorrence for authority often incurred severe penalties. The participants each carry incredible burdens. Becoming privy to this knowledge provided the researcher a certain understanding of their academic difficulties. They not only struggle to read, in many cases they struggle to make their way in the world.

Evaluation of Student Progress

Before embarking on the study, the researcher interviewed the classroom teacher, Dr. French, as to the general attitudes of students in her class. When asked about the students' attitudes toward reading, Dr. French indicated that in general, none of the students exhibit value for reading. She reported they all complain when they are made to read during Sustained Silent Reading and often doze off when reading. She felt that they are much more interested in discussions, but often get off the subject at hand.

When asked whether students connect reading to their lives outside of the classroom, she responded, "I do not find that these students make connections between the things they read." She further elaborated that in her opinion, students do not carry any of the information gathered

from previous school years to the current year, nor do they make connections in other classes. She continued in saying that "teachers have noted the continuous problems with the apathetic attitudes of the students. The teachers have even planned interdisciplinary activities, but the students are not making connections between information gathered in one class to information gathered in another class."

To further explore students' attitudes the researcher asked Dr. French to comment on students' written responses to reading. "The attitudes are poor," she said. Students have the attitude that they only read because they are at school and it is an assignment. Dr. French feels that students view reading as a chore, not as a means to learn or enjoy. Even when she discussed with the students how reading develops background knowledge, and helps with the LEAP test, she felt they were still unmotivated to read. She continued that the best demonstrations of their comprehension are their test scores and those scores are usually very low.

After having acquired parental consent, the researcher gathered any necessary preliminary information from Dr. French and observed the participants during three 90-minute class periods. Initial participant data was collected during Week 0. Each participant completed the posttests for the Interest and Attitude Inventory, the Reading Usefulness Evaluation and the Classroom Reading Inventory before the implementation of the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program was begun.

During the first few weeks of the study, the participants' behavior exemplified the observations made by Dr. French. They were reluctant to read silently and hesitant to read aloud in front of their peers. The participants appeared reliant upon a teacher to read orally to them. When asked why, many stated that they did not like to read. As the study continued, many of the students privately shared their feelings of frustration when reading silently and their discomfort

reading aloud because they believed their reading ability was weak and feared others may laugh at them. As the weeks progressed, the students appeared to become more confident and began to volunteer to read aloud, answer questions, initiate discussions, and offer suggestions for creating plans to integrate their knowledge and curiosities of current events with the classroom objectives. Specific data outlining the progress of each participant as evidenced by the five evaluative tools is listed in the following section.

Robert

Robert is a 14-year-old, eighth grade student. He lives with both parents and three older brothers. At home, he is assigned specific chores such as keeping his room clean and dusting the den and living room. Robert is most interested in sports, drawing and video games. Robert tends to get in trouble at school because of his resistance to authority. He resents being told what to do and has repeatedly been sent to the office and assigned to the Time Out Room (TOR).

Interest and Attitude Inventory

In his initial Interest and Attitude Inventory, Robert asserted he did not like to read. Even though he owns three books, Robert said he did not read them. He had no favorite book and would rather watch television, play Nintendo games, or draw than read anything. If he were forced to read, he would choose a comic book. He felt that knowing how to read was important; however, reading was not fun. He stated that he is very happy with his life and would not change a thing. He reads to no one at home and no one read to him.

At the end of the eight-week study, Robert again completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory. Robert still believed that reading was important, and acknowledged he was beginning to enjoy reading. He still prefers to play Nintendo, yet he has begun to read his books

and plans to find other books and magazines pertaining to his interests. He has since begun to read to members of his family and requests that other read to him.

Classroom Reading Inventory

TABLE 3.1.

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Robert)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6
% Correct	Pre	100	95	85	95	85	65		
	Post	100	100	95	100	95	85	85	70

Robert's Classroom Reading Inventory pretest revealed his difficulty with vocabulary. His scores on the word list placed him at a high third grade level. However, the posttest revealed the growth Robert had made (See Table 3.1). The scores indicate Robert gained at least one grade level, placing his word list vocabulary at the high fourth grade level.

TABLE 3.2

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Robert)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus	Frus	
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus	Frus
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus

The Classroom Reading Inventory also addressed Robert's skills in reading graded paragraphs. The pretest measured his independent (Ind) level in the areas of significant word errors (SIG WR) and comprehension (Comp) to be at the Primary level with his instructional (Inst) level reaching the fourth grade. He began showing signs of frustration (Frus) at the fifth grade. In the posttest, Robert's independent reading level increase by two grade levels to the

second grade and his instructional level increased to the fifth grade. He did not exhibit frustration until the sixth grade. (See Table 3.2). Overall, Robert score suggest a gain in reading to be one grade level.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

TABLE 3.3

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Robert)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	1	5	5	1	5	5	5	1	1	5	5	5	1	1	5	5	5	2	4	2
Post	3	5	5	1	5	5	5	3	2	5	5	5	2	3	5	5	5	4	4	3

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation, employing the Likert scale method, was administered to Robert as well. Comparing the pretest, given before the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program began, with the posttest, administered after eight weeks of instruction demonstrates a change in Robert's attitude about reading. (See Table 3.3) Items 1, 8, 9, 13, 14, and 18 denote a change in Robert's views about reading usefulness. The most significant changes in Robert's responses were in Items 1, 8, 14, and 18. Item 1 addressed whether or not the participant read on a daily basis. In the pretest, Robert indicated he did not read by his choice of "1" representing "No, Not At All!" The posttest demonstrated a change in Robert's attitude by his choice of number "3" which states "Maybe." Item 8 inquired whether one must read to become part of a community. Robert initially chose "No! Not at all!" On the post test, Robert's answer was "3" indicating a change to "Maybe!" Item 14 referred to the relationship between reading and playing sports. Again, Robert's posttest answer indicated a change of two variables from "No, Not at All!" to "Maybe!" Lastly, item 18 asked whether he would enjoy reading if he could choose his own materials. Robert's answer changed from "No! Not Much!" to "Yes, A Little!"

Journals

Robert did not write lengthy entries in his journals. Many entries were one or two sentences at most. When given the Week 1 journal prompt "Do you think you are a good reader? Why or Why not?" He merely wrote "No." During Week 2 the journal prompt was "Is reading important? Why or why not?" Robert definitely agrees that reading is important. "Yes, you have to know how to read, but I already learned that. I can read the stuff I need to read." One journal prompt of Week 3 investigated the impact of studying about Native Americans. The students were asked if our supplemental materials made reading more interesting. He said, "Yes, I didn't know our neighborhood was named because of Indians. I don't ever see any where I live. It makes me wonder why they moved." Week 4's journal prompts were "Is reading useful outside of school? Why?" Robert did concede that reading outside of the academic area was necessary "a little. Like if you went to a new restaurant or you wanted to know the rules for a new X-Box game. Or for when you don't finish all of your homework." After a lesson on propaganda in Weeks 4 and 5, Robert was asked if understanding propaganda will affect the way he reads. He replied, "Why do people want to trick you? I'm gonna be careful when I buy something next time. I will read the ad."

The Week 5 journal entry addressed the types of reading materials that would most interest him. He responded that he would like to read magazines such as Jet or Ebony and sometimes he would read on the internet if it were about a computer game that he liked. He added that mostly he just looked at the pictures.

During Week 6 the students researched the internet about concerns they had about our school. "Did researching materials about your school concern encourage you to read more?" was the journal prompt. Robert's response was, "I did not know other schools had the same

problems. Maybe their answer will work for us. I will try." During Week 7 the participants studied legal issues in the newspaper. "How did the law activity affect your reading?" was the journal prompt. Robert responded, "I like to know my rights. Those people were dumb to do that. Everybody knows you don't drink and drive. They should know that from all of the stories in the newspaper about people who get in trouble."

The final journal prompt, "After this program, do you think you are a better reader? Why or why not?" offered Robert an opportunity to elaborate on his views. He wrote: "I still don't want to be reading all the time. I do see why I should work hard in reading class. I can learn some new fun things and my grades can go up, too. I could even learn from the newspaper now. We get it every day."

Most of Robert's writing was done in print and was filled with misspelled words. His sentence structure was short and the word choices were predominately monosyllabic. His resistance to writing was further demonstrated while in group activities. He chose others to do the writing, while he made suggestions.

Researcher Observations

Robert was slow to complete any assignment. When allotted enough time he would accomplish the task with some amount of difficulty. He was always the last participant to complete the task. As the other participants finished their assignments, Robert's frustration would escalate. The more he would hurry the more mistakes he would make. Inevitably, he would become angry and complain about how others were finished; yet he did not complain about the assignment per se.

While reading aloud, Robert appeared to be 'saying' the words one at a time rather than comprehending the meaning of the passage. During Week 2, Robert announced in class "We

shouldn't have to read because I never have to read. I know all I need to know already!" Initially Robert was very uncomfortable reading aloud. If he felt like someone was making fun of him or merely looking at him differently, he would get angry and start an argument. As the program continued, Robert's confidence appeared to increase and as a result, Robert was less defensive.

While doing syllabication assignments during Week 3 using words taken from a magazine of his choosing, "Sports Illustrated," Robert stated that the assignment was beneficial for him because it helped him to read better. This statement led me to believe that Robert's reluctance to become involved in reading came from his inability to decode language and his frustration in being unable to read materials that were of interest to him.

Robert eventually seemed to relax around the other participants and enjoyed the group assignments. He once told me that he did not have friends in the class until he became part of this program.

It is the researcher's belief that Robert's view of reading has changed. By evaluating his overall answers, the researcher gathered that Robert initially viewed reading as something necessary; however, he had not linked the skill of reading to every day occurrences or to pleasurable activities such as sports, or leisure reading. He now views reading as a skill he can master. He understands that he has to put forth the effort, but the effort is worth it. Robert, more than the other participants, needs to see direct relevance of the reading assignment to his life. Only then does it become worth the effort he must put forth. Through the last week of the study, Robert continued to read slowing, using his finger as a guide. Robert commented several times how his reading ability has grown as well as how his enjoyment of reading has increased.

As the program progressed, Robert's attitude did change as his confidence appeared to grow stronger. He even began to volunteer to read aloud and took the lead in many discussions

based upon what he and others read aloud. He was encouraging to other participants when they read. He really liked being a part of the group. However, throughout the study he continued to demonstrate a lack of initiative when he was asked to read his textbook silently.

The compiled data gathered from Week 0 through Week 9, suggests a change occurred in Robert's attitude toward reading. As evidenced by the changes in his responses on the Interest and Attitude Inventory and the Reading Usefulness Evaluation, and his journals, Robert has embraced the idea that reading skills learned in the classroom directly affects his life, causing him to become more invested, or motivated, to read.

Additionally, through the 8 week program, Robert's scores on the Classroom Reading Inventory combined with his classroom performance, implies an increase in his reading ability.

Michelle

Michelle is a 14-year-old eighth grade student who lives at home with both parents and two younger sisters. Her favorite activity is going to the movies and the mall with her family. At home, she is responsible for washing dishes, folding clothes and vacuuming. Michelle generally enjoys school only because she gets to see her friends. She often is in trouble for not following the school dress code.

During the course of the study, Michelle was assigned to the Time Out Room (TOR) for inappropriate behavior in class. She came to the classroom, stated she was assigned to TOR. Again she showed no emotion. It was later learned that she has a terrible temper and was engaged in a shouting match with a teacher. During Week 5, Michelle was suspended for fighting. She came to class that morning and participating in the usual routine. There was no indication of a problem until the assistant principal came to get her. She mutely gathered her things and left the room.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

In her initial Interest and Attitude Inventory, Michelle said that she preferred talking to reading because "when you talk to people, you can learn all kinds of stuff." She did read the first *Harry Potter* book stating "it was only good when it got interesting." Other than *Harry Potter*, Michelle stated she had no interest in reading.

Michelle has no one at home who reads to her, however, she does read children's books to her younger sister occasionally.

After the eight weeks, Michelle stated "reading is good when you learn things about your life." She began reading the second *Harry Potter* book and she has begun reading magazines such as "Oprah," "Ebony," and "Seventeen" because she could "learn a lot about hair styles and clothes and makeup and relationships." She contends that she reads to her younger sister almost daily, but there is still no one at home who reads to her.

Classroom Reading Inventory

Michelle's scores on the Classroom Reading Inventory - Word Lists (TABLE 3.4) demonstrate growth in her word knowledge and her comprehension abilities. The pretest established her vocabulary level to be at a high fourth grade level.

TABLE 3.4.

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Michelle)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
% Correct	Pre	100	100	100	100	80	80	70	60	
	Post	100	100	95	100	85	85	80	75	70

During the initial evaluation procedure, Michelle demonstrated difficulty with syllabication. She quickly gave an answer that began with the same first letter as the word on the CRI word list. If she could not think of a word, she said, "don't know." After the evaluation

was completed Michelle said "those words don't mean anything to me anyway." She appeared to see no reason to attempt the words on the list. During the posttest, Michelle seemed to be more thoughtful in her approach to each list. She took more time and attempted to sound out each unfamiliar word. Michelle did inquire whether she improved from the pretest. Her posttest scores established her vocabulary to be at the sixth grade level.

TABLE 3.5

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Michelle)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Frus		
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus	Inst	Frus		
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus

The Classroom Reading Inventory Graded Paragraphs (Table 3.5) revealed Michelle's inexperience with various reading materials. When reading the Level 3 paragraph, "Pa Won't Like This," she read as if she were reading a list of words as opposed to reading a passage. She stopped many times during the selection and repeatedly stated that she did not understand the language. Her lack of comprehension was evident in her scoring at the frustration level when asked about the passage. She achieved the significant word error (SIG WR) independent level (Ind) as far as the Primer level and the significant word error instructional level (Inst) level through the middle of the third grade level. Her independent comprehension level was also at the Primer grade and her instructional level appeared to be no further than a high third grade level. She reached frustration (Frus) at the fifth grade level.

However, after the eight-week research period and her exposure to a variety of "voices" in print, Michelle's Classroom Reading Inventory scores were higher. Michelle's posttest (Table

3.5) indicates her significant word error score for a graded paragraph is now a high third grade level and with her instructional level reaching to a low sixth grade level. She also made gains in her comprehension levels as noted by her independent level at the second grade and her instructional level extending to the middle sixth grade level. She reached the frustration level at seventh grade. The overall gains by Michelle during the eight-week program suggest her reading level increased by one and one-half grade levels.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

TABLE 3.6

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Michelle)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	4	5	5	1	3	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4
Post	4	5	5	1	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation, employing the Likert scale method, was administered to Michelle. Comparing the pretest, given before the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program began, with the posttest, administered after nine weeks of instruction demonstrates a change in Michelle's views. (See Table 3.6.) Items number 5, 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, and 20 signify a change in Michelle's attitude about reading usefulness. The degree of change for each of the items is one measure. Items 5, 7, and 10 posed questions concerning the value of reading as it pertains to eating in a restaurant, visiting a doctor's office, and going grocery shopping. Michelle's pretest answers were "Yes, a Little." Her posttest answer for each, "Yes, A Lot" indicates an increase in the amount of reading she believes is necessary for eating in a restaurant, visiting a doctor's office, and going grocery shopping. Items 13 and 16 assess the participant's opinion related to reading skills necessary to cook and to use the internet. On both questions, Michelle increases the degree of reading usefulness by one variance.

Journals

Michelle responded minimally to journal cues. She completed each assignment mutely, showing no facial expressions or body language that the researcher could interpret as being happy or unhappy about the assignment. For the most part, all of her writings were unemotional.

During Week 2 Michelle was asked to write about her feelings about reading. She responded, "I don't really like reading but I know it something that I need to know so that I could be someone very successful." 'Is reading useful outside of school?' was the Week 4 journal prompt. Michelle response was "Of course. You halfta read to do all kinds of things like shop, find phone numbers, read notes from your friends and look at the internet." The Week 5 journal prompt asked what types of reading she enjoyed. She wrote "It depends on what book I read because I like to read book with action. Adventures, drama not nothing that wouldn't be interesting."

Another journal, based upon activities from Weeks 4 and 5, asked if 'understanding propaganda affect[s] the way you read?' Michelle's response was, "Yes, Now I know why only famous people try to sell junk on TV. Now, I don't know if I can believe them. They just want me to buy it." The Week 6 journal, based upon the lesson, asked, 'Did researching materials about your school concern encourage you to read more?' Her response was, "Yes, other kids have retarded sisters, but nobody want to talk about it. I feel the same way. I learned about my sister and might know more about why she like she is."

After the eight weeks of the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program Michelle, in the journal for Week 8, Michelle wrote that she thought she was a better reader "cause she had got to read all kinds of reading material, but that don't change [her] mind to read a whole bunch. [She has] too much going on right now."

Researcher Observations

Michelle was the most interesting of the participants. She never smiled. She remained emotionless during the research process. The only indication she ever allowed was exhibiting tiredness. When she inquired about her posttest scores her voice was monotone and her face was expressionless. She did not interact with other participants unless the assignment deemed it necessary; yet she openly watched each participant closely. She made no effort to interact with anyone. When others said "Good Morning," she looked at them and said nothing.

She attended to each assignment, not volunteering to anything extra. She read aloud only when directly assigned the task. When she read she used her finger as a guide. She read each word without feeling, observing no punctuation marks; the words spoken as if in a cadence with an unchanging beat.

During the first few weeks, she was unable or unwilling to answer any of the comprehension questions even if she actually read the passage aloud. When given the opportunity to incorporate pop culture such as *Ebony, Jet*, or *Glamour* magazines into the assignment, Michelle appeared to gather information based upon the pictures to a greater degree more than the printed text. Michelle appeared to understand the messages of the text, but was unwilling to afford the effort necessary to complete the task. The researcher did not believe she was unable to read the materials as much as she believed that Michelle had no desire to read.

As the weeks progressed, Michelle began to attempt to divide words into syllables in order to correctly pronounce them. After such attempts, she, maintaining a straight face, would look to the researcher for some kind of affirmation that she was pronouncing them correctly. Even when she was complimented on her reading or responses to questions, she showed no

emotion. She began to read more clearly and read longer passages. Her answers to comprehension questions began to become more detailed.

Michelle did exhibit an increase in her reading ability. However, the researcher believes that Michelle will demonstrate only little motivation to continue to read, even pop culture magazines and books without having someone to direct and encourage her or whet her appetite for the book. Contradicting her previously stated enjoyment of *Harry Potter*, she stated many times that she does "not look for stuff to read."

Regardless of Michelle not demonstrating any signs of excitement, and her protests of not looking for reading material, the researcher believes that Michelle was proud of her improvement. Her commitment to the project was evidenced by her prompt attendance with the exception of TOR and a suspension, even though it has been rumored that Michelle often skips class during the day. She was quietly attentive and vigilantly watchful. It is almost as if she accepts what life has to offer and deals with it. She does not demonstrate much drive or motivation to make changes even though she appears to know she could broaden her knowledge and experiences. The researcher did not believe that Michelle demonstrated her true ability. She exhibited signs of having been a reluctant reader, one who has the ability, but lacks the desire or motivation to read.

Michelle's journal entries, Interest and Attitude Inventory answers and Reading Usefulness Evaluation responses combined with the researcher's observations all suggest that Michelle is fully aware of the importance of reading and acknowledges the need for reading in her own life. Additionally, Michelle's Classroom Reading Inventory scores imply a gain in readability skills.

Ronald

Ronald is a 13-year-old eighth grade student. He lives with his father, grandmother, great-grandmother, three uncles and one aunt. Ronald enjoys his home life. He is responsible for cleaning his room and washing dishes. His interests are sports and video games.

Dr. French indicated other students in the class generally criticize Ronald because of his hyperactivity. She added that he "does not complete one 15-minute Sustained Silent Reading period without having to be corrected or told to read numerous times." He has difficulty remaining quiet and still. It appears that he is either in motion or asleep. In Week 7, two girls in his English class smeared lotion on his desk. When he sat down in the desk he basically slid right out of the seat and onto the floor. He was very upset about the incident. He was not physically hurt, but his feelings were greatly hurt.

Ronald is a sensitive young man who wants to please others. He tries to be friends with all of the students in the class, but the majority of them do not seem to care for him very much.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

In his initial Interest and Attitude Inventory, Ronald indicated he preferred talking to writing, reading, drawing, or listening to stories because he "likes to talk." He does own a few books and his favorites are *Drive By* and books about dog breeds. Ronald said that no one at home likes to read to him and he only reads to his uncle and that happens very seldom. He said that even thought he feels that reading is important; he hardly ever reads magazines, comics, or newspapers. The only time Ronald reads is when there is nothing else to do and reading "is still boring."

In Ronald's post Interest and Attitude Inventory, his answers propose a deeper appreciation for reading. When asked whether he would prefer writing, reading, talking,

listening to a story, or drawing, he again chose talking. However, he elaborated adding, "Talking is one way to learn and I like people." He continued to hold *Drive By* and books about dog breeds as his favorite books, but added "poems and a lot of other stuff." He still contends that no one reads to him at home, yet he now reads to his uncle and his grandmother at least once a week "because he can do it better now."

Also, in the second inventory, Ronald allows that he reads comic books and sometimes read magazines, even though he "mostly looks at the pictures, but [he] still learns good stuff." He added that he likes to read, "when it is exciting."

Classroom Reading Inventory

TABLE 3.7

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Ronald)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
% Correct	Pre	100	100	100	95	95	75	70	60		
	Post	100	100	100	100	100	80	85	85	75	45

Ronald's Classroom Reading Inventory pretest (Table 3.7) suggests Ronald has had little experience with vocabulary. He scored at a low fourth grade reading level. However, the posttest scores (Table 3.7) make known Ronald's three grade level improvement. Over the eight weeks of Life-Application Learning Instructional Program Ronald's vocabulary score increased from the fourth grade to a low seventh grade level.

The Classroom Reading Inventory also addressed Ronald's skill level in oral reading and reading comprehension (Table 3.8). The pretest measured his independent (Ind) level with regard to significant word errors (SIG WR) and comprehension (Comp) to be at the low fourth grade level with his instructional level (Inst) reaching to a sixth grade level. He showed frustration at the seventh grade level. The results of the posttest demonstrate some improvement.

His significant word error (SIG WR) independent reading level marginally increased to the high fourth grade and his instructional level increased to the eighth grade level. His frustration level could not be identified as the Classroom Reading Inventory measures readability levels up to the eighth grade. Ronald's independent comprehension level increased to a high sixth grade level. Again his true instructional level and frustration level could not be assessed.

TABLE 3.8

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Ronald)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pre	SIG WR	Inst	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus	
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Frus	
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Inst
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind

Ronald had difficulties reading selections for Level 3 and Level 7. Level 3 is a folk tale utilizing colloquialisms unfamiliar to Ronald. The different language structure appeared to baffle him. He read apprehensively and repeated words frequently. Level 7 is an historical passage about Native Americans. The pronunciation of the terms posed as stumbling blocks. Knowledge of the terms appeared to hamper his success in answering the comprehension questions. The improvement demonstrated in the posttest may, in part, be attributed to the diversity of reading materials used during the Life-Application Learning Program.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

Ronald was given the Reading Usefulness Evaluation during Week 0 and again after Week 9 (Table 3.9). Items 3, 7, 9, and 15 exhibit differences between Ronald's views about reading in the pretest and posttest. Items 3 and 9 strongly suggest Ronald's change in his views of reading. Item 3 asks whether the test taker reads every day. Ronald's pretest answer was

"Maybe" and his posttest answer was "Yes, A Lot." Item 9 asks whether the test taker likes to read at home. Ronald's pretest answer was "No, Not Much" and his post test answer was "Yes, A Lot." Question 7 refers to reading in the doctor's office. Ronald's answer dramatically changed from "No, Not at All" to "Yes, A Lot." During a lesson about reading for safety Ronald was amazed that some medications could not be taken in concert and the reactions could be fatal. Also, he was not aware of the directions and warning labels printed on over-the-counter medications.

TABLE 3.9

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Ronald)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	4	5	3	1	5	5	1	1	2	5	5	5	1	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
Post	4	5	5	1	5	5	5	1	4	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Ronald's reaction to Item number 13 interested the researcher. He stated that number 13 did not make sense because people don't use cookbooks. He was surprised that others in the group had parents or caregivers who did use cookbooks or recipes.

Journals

The first journal prompt asked, "Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?" Ronald's reply was, "No, I don't know all the words." Week 2 asked if reading was important. He replied that it was very important. "It is something that smart people can do." The Week 3 journal asked, 'Did studying about Native American history in your area make reading more interesting?' Ronald replied, "Yes, it would be fun to have a Indian to play with. I could ride his horse and he could teach me those words." During Week 4 the students were asked to write the usefulness of reading outside of the school setting. Ronald's response was two-fold. First, he

stated that reading was interesting. Secondly, he said, "To get a job you will have to know how to read. Reading is one of the most important things in life. This is why I like reading."

Weeks 4 and 5 addressed propaganda techniques. When asked if the lesson affected the way he read, Ronald stated, "I like to buy football clothes. Next time my grandmother takes me shopping I will check to see if the shirt is good or not. I will only buy good stuff."

Week 7 investigated any changes in the participant's view of reading. Ronald wrote that he still thought reading was very important and now he knows "that reading is not just school work, but something I need for my life. [He] can't learn new things without knowing how to read about it." He elaborated on these ideas in his response to journal prompt 8 which asked, "After this program, do you think you are a better reader?" "Yes, I can read much better now. I think I learned things I will use in the future. Reading isn't so hard when you know how."

Researcher Observations

Ronald was the liveliest of the participants. From the beginning, he had to be reminded to stay on task, quit talking, complete his assignment or stay in his seat. However, the more time we spent together the more disciplined he became. It appears his discipline was driven more by his desire to belong and be accepted within the group of eight participants than concern for repercussions from the researcher. His behavior may have also improved because Dr. French established behavior as criteria for staying in the program.

When the research program first began, he was a bit unsure. When the classroom students began to view the study participants as special, Ronald began to brag about being a part of a special group helping the researcher. His being set apart under the particular circumstances appeared to elevate his standing in the class as well as offer positive strokes to Ronald. Throughout the program Ronald repeatedly said he was learning new words, reading better, and

becoming excited about new books and magazines. Ronald's inquisitive nature proved to be a catalyst for discussions. His enthusiasm was contagious and for some of the other less boisterous participants, Ronald's energetic nature seemed to be a source of motivated for them to become more engaged in the activities.

When Ronald read silently or aloud, he used his finger as a guide. He positioned himself where he could lean over, placing his face closely to the text suggesting he may have vision problems. Through information in his cumulative folder, it was noted that a vision referral dated November 2001 had been submitted; however, there is no documentation of action taken in this matter. Ronald did not wear eye glasses during the course of the study, and he claimed that he did not own a pair. Another request for an eye examination was submitted. At the close of the research project, Ronald had not been to the eye doctor.

During the first few weeks of the study, while reading Ronald frequently paused after a phrase or sentence looking to the researcher for affirmation that he was reading correctly. While undergoing the series of pretests he often would say "don't know" then quickly – loudly say, "Wait! Wait!" and attempt to say the word or come up with an answer. As the reading materials became more difficult, Ronald would stutter. Through the course of the study, Ronald began to take his time and more thoughtfully compose answers or sound out words. Not only did his reading improve, and his stuttering decreased, but also his confidence and acceptance in the group grew as well.

Ronald's responses to the Interest and Attitude Inventory, the Reading Usefulness Evaluation, and his journals combined with the researcher observations suggest a noticeable increase in Ronald's motivation to read. Along with this, Ronald's scores on the Classroom Reading Inventory indicate growth in his reading ability.

Rachel

Rachel is a 14-year-old eighth grade student who lives with her mother, stepfather, a younger sister, an older brother and two younger brothers. She has various cleaning duties around the home and baby-sits for her younger brothers and sister. Dr. French contends that Rachel will sometimes read during Sustained Silent Reading because it is mandated. Otherwise, Rachel shows no interest in reading.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

In the initial Interest and Attitude Inventory, Rachel indicated she would rather write than read, talk, listen to stories, or drawing "because when [she goes] to high school [she] will know how to write better." She does own three books, but has not read one in a long time. One is from the Babysitters Club series; one from the Sweet Valley Twins series and the last is from the Goose Bumps series. Her favorite is from the Babysitters Club series because "it is interesting."

Rachel disclosed she reads to her younger brother when he is good. However, she said she might choose to read for her own pleasure if there is nothing else for her to do or if there is no one with whom to visit.

After the eight-week program, Rachel completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory again. She now prefers reading and writing to talking, listening to stories or drawing "because reading gives her more stuff to write about and [she] can know more about life." She has increased the number of books she owns by buying two more from the Babysitters Club series and one more from the Goose Bump series. Magazines were now a source of reading for her as well. She indicated in the second Inventory that she reads more often to both of her younger brothers and her sister. She asks that her younger siblings read to her so she can "make sure they do it right."

Classroom Reading Inventory

TABLE 3.10

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Rachel)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
% Correct	Pre	100	100	95	90	95	80	70	50	
	Post	100	100	100	100	100	90	80	70	65

Rachel's Classroom Reading Inventory pretest (Table 3.10) suggests Rachel has had limited exposure with vocabulary. She scored at the fourth grade level. After eight weeks of the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program her posttest scores (Table 3.10) rose by one level to the fifth grade.

TABLE 3.11

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Rachel)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pre	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus		
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Frus	Inst	Frus	Frus		
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus	Frus

The Classroom Reading Inventory also addressed Rachel's skill level in oral reading and comprehension (Table 3.11). The pretest measured her independent level (Ind) with regard to significant word errors (SIG WD) and comprehension (Comp) to be at the second grade level with her significant word error instructional level (Inst) reaching the low fifth grade level and her instructional level for comprehension reaching the low fourth grade. She demonstrated frustration level (Frus) at the fifth grade level. The results of the Classroom Reading Inventory posttest signify Rachel's gains. Her independent reading level in both significant word errors

and comprehension appraised at the low fourth grade level, and her instructional level for significant word errors peeked at the high sixth grade level while her independent comprehension level capped at a middle sixth grade. She became frustrated at the seventh grade level.

Overall Rachel's scores demonstrate an increase in one grade level for independent level, and her instructional level gained one grade level. At the end of the eight-week period, Rachel scores demonstrated an overall reading ability gain of one grade level.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

TABLE 3.12

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Rachel)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	2	5	5	1	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	4	3
Post	4	5	5	1	4	5	5	3	4	4	5	5	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	4

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation was first administered to Rachel during Week 0. The posttest was administered during Week 9. The results of the pretest and posttest are shown in Table 3.12. The differences in her responses to items 1, 7, 11, 15, 16, and 20 indicate a change from her initial point of view about reading. Items 1 and 7 have two degrees of variance where 11, 15, 16, and 20 vary by only one degree. Item 1 inquires whether the participant reads every day. Rachel's pretest answer was "No, Not Much" and her posttest answer was "Yes, A Little." Item 7 asks if one must read to go to the doctor. Her pretest answer was "maybe" and her posttest answer was "Yes, A Lot." She was quite surprised by the amount of material to be read in association with one's health.

Items 11, 15, and 16 inquire respectively whether one has to read in order drive a car, sing, and use the internet. In all three cases, Rachel's answer moved toward the affirmative by

one degree. Item 20 refers to "made up stories about made up people." Again, Rachel's posttest score varied by one degree toward the affirmative.

Journals

The Week 1 journal prompted Rachel to consider whether or not she was a good reader. She said "No, because I don't like to. It is hard and I don't always get what I am supposed to." For Week 2 she was to evaluate the importance of reading. Rachel said, "Yes, reading is important because say if you try to get a job and you have to read something, in order to get the job, and you don't know how to read."

One of the journal entries for Week 3 was asked about the day's lesson. 'Did studying about Native American history in your area make reading more interesting?' Rachel replied, "Yes, I want to know how they looked. Maybe we could talk about that later."

For Week 4, the participants were to contemplate the usefulness of reading outside of the school setting. Rachel felt like it was important because she "could read about someone and could know what they lived through and what kind of clothes they wore." She continued in this vain with the Week 5 question "What would you like to read and why?" by purporting the importance of reading about current styles. "I think I would like to read about movie stars and who does their hair. As a young woman, I need to know what the styles are. I like Essence and Ebony the best."

A journal question based upon the propaganda lesson in Weeks 4 and 5 asked if her reading was affected by the activities. Rachel said, "We didn't have long enough to read it all. Maybe we could read some more tomorrow." Rachel appeared to be disturbed by the fact that she was not able to continue with her reading at that time. She wanted to remain in the library as opposed to attending her next class.

When Rachel was asked if her views on reading changed (Week 7), she replied, "Yes and no, I always thought reading was important. It was just hard. Now I know that there is stuff for me to read. I don't know if that means I changed or not."

Researcher Observations

Rachel did not begin the study as a reader. Dr. French pointed out Rachel only read during Sustained Silent Reading and only when she was seated where Dr. French could see her. She was very quiet in class, drawing no attention to herself. This may have been due to her lack of preparation and her desire not to be caught unprepared. During Week1 Rachel was assigned to the Time Out Room (TOR); she had no planner (a requirement for this school); she had not copied her 'Word for the Day' list; she did study for her test; and got in trouble during Sustained Silent Reading for creating a 'Slam Book.' Even with such an unpleasant beginning, Rachel metamorphosed into an active, even though somewhat struggling, reader.

Within the confines of the research group, Rachel could no longer remain unnoticed. The feelings of prestige from other participants in the group appeared to eventually affect Rachel. By Week 3, she was cautiously involved in the program. Her other teachers commented Rachel used her participation in the research group as a status benchmark. She began to consider herself as special and let others know only a few students were 'allowed' to participate and no one else could be added.

Rachel read orally connecting phrases indiscriminately, often rereading entire passages aloud several times before she understood the meaning of the text. She observed little, if any, punctuation and appeared to determine the phrase length by her need to inhale.

In reading the novel, High Elk's Treasure, Rachel became fascinated with reading about other people's lives. She contributed to the discussions, comparing the characters actions to her

own and people she knew. It appeared she felt reading passages written in first person, fiction or non-fiction, would be easier for her. She began to enjoy reading magazine interviews with celebrities.

Once she began to realize how much information about fashion and movie stars she could access through print, she appeared to embrace the need and enjoyment for reading. Her confidence grew as she read more often and as she read about topics about which she was already knowledgeable.

Rachel, too, demonstrated through her journals, Interest and Attitude Inventory responses, and Reading Usefulness Evaluation scores a significant increase in her motivation to read. The researcher's observations support this finding. Additionally, Rachel's scores on the Classroom Reading Inventory posttest suggest gains in reading ability.

Calvin

Calvin is a 13-year-old eighth grade student who lives with his mother, father, older sister and older brother. He is responsible for chores at home such as folding clothes, washing dishes, cleaning his room and taking out the trash. He is interested in all types of sports but mostly interested in basketball and football.

Dr. French suggested that Calvin would rather sleep than do anything else. She said that his teachers have to constantly remind him to sit up or wake up and that he frequently fails to turn in his assignments. She added that his notebooks and assignments are disorganized and incomplete. He often did not bring the required materials and supplies to class. Other students have commented that Calvin 'hangs out' on the street late at night and associates with a group of older males, most of whom are on probation or who are often in trouble with the local law enforcement agencies. No stranger to trouble himself, Calvin was suspended during Week 4 for

fighting. Being in trouble at school does not appear to bother him. As of yet, he has not been convicted of any crimes.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

Calvin first completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory before the Life-Application Learning Methods Program began. He stated when given a choice of writing, reading, talking, listening to stories or drawing Calvin would rather talk or listen to stories. At that time, he owned three books – one from the Goose Bumps series, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Native Son*. His favorite was the Goose Bumps book because it "scares [him]." He stated that no one read to him specifically at home, yet he said that members of his family do read aloud sometime. He sometimes read aloud to his sister.

During Week Nine, Calvin completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory again. He stated that when given a choice, he would now choose reading or talking. He has purchased a few more books, another from the Goose Bumps series and the first Harry Potter book. He continued to state that no one at home specifically read to him, but he has increased in the amount of time he reads to his sister.

Classroom Reading Inventory

TABLE 3.13

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Calvin)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
% Correct	Pre	100	100	95	95	85	80	70		
	Post	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	65	55

Calvin's Classroom Reading Inventory pretest revealed his sight vocabulary level (Table 3.13) to be at a high fourth grade level. His posttest suggests moderate gains of one year, placing his sight vocabulary to be at the high fifth grade or low sixth grade level.

TABLE 3.14

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Calvin)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pre	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus	Frus	Frus
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus	Frus
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Inst	Inst

The Classroom Reading Inventory also addressed Calvin's skills in reading and comprehending grade level paragraphs. The pretest measured his independent (Ind) grade level reading in the area of significant word errors to be at a third grade level and his instructional (Inst) grade level to be at a fifth grade level. By grade six, Calvin had reached the frustration (Frus) level. In comprehension (Comp), Calvin's independent level reached second grade and his instructional level reached sixth grade. His frustration level was reached at the seventh grade.

Calvin's posttest given in Week Nine of the program suggests gains in Calvin's reading ability. His scores with regard to significant word errors rose. His independent level elevated to high fourth grade and his instructional and frustration level could not be measured due to grade limitations of the Classroom Reading Inventory.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation, employing the Likert scale method, was administered to Calvin. Comparing the pretest, given before the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program began, with the posttest, administered after 9weeks of instruction demonstrates a change in Calvin's attitude toward reading. (Table 3.15). Changes in Calvin's answers were noted in items number 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, and 20.

TABLE 3.15

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Calvin)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	3	4	5	1	5	5	5	4	2	5	2	5	1	4	4	5	5	4	4	4
Post	4	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	5	5

Item 1 asks, "Do you read every day?" Initially Calvin answered "Maybe." His posttest answer showed an increase of one degree to "Yes, A Little." Item 2 refers to the importance of reading. Calvin's answer changed from "Yes, A Little" to "Yes, A Lot." Item 8 refers to the importance of reading in the community. Calvin's posttest reveals an increase of one degree to "Yes, A Lot." Item 9 asks about reading at home. Calvin's posttest answer differs from his pretest answer by 3 degrees from "No, Not Much" to "Yes, A Lot." Item 11 regarding reading in order to drive demonstrates a 3 degree change from "Not, Not Much" to "Yes, A Lot" and item 13 regarding reading in order to cook demonstrates a 2 degree change from "No, Not at All" to "Maybe." Item 14 addressing reading and playing sports denotes a change of 1 degree from "Yes, A Little" to "Yes, A Lot." Item 18 asks "Do you enjoy reading if you can choose the reading material?" Calvin's pretest answer was "Yes, A Little" and his posttest answer was "Yes, A Lot". Item 19 refers to enjoyment of stories about real people. Again, Calvin's answer increased by 1 degree from "Yes, A Little" to "Yes, A Lot." Item 20 refers to enjoyment about made up people. Again, Calvin's answer increased by 1 degree from "Yes, A Little" to "Yes, A Lot."

Item 17 refers to learning from reading assignments in the classroom. Initially, Calvin answered "Yes, A Lot," however, in the posttest he answered "Yes, A Little."

Many changes occurred in Calvin's answers between the time of the pretest and the posttest. By evaluating the overall results of his answers, it appears that Calvin, through the

Life-Application Learning Instructional Program, views reading as a necessary skill providing needed information as well as pleasure.

Journals

In his journal for Week 1, Calvin initially stated he was not a reader because "that is what you do at school to answer the questions." He further elaborated in the Week 2 journal writing "Reading is only important at school." The Week 3 journal prompt asked about weekend activities and inquired if those activities required reading. Calvin wrote about extreme sports. He "likes to do extreme sports and has learned more about them from Sports Illustrated. Maybe they will list the rules or something and I can play them with my friends, too." During the course of the study, his journal entries began to reflect reading in a new way.

During Week 3, the lesson focused on Native American culture in the area. Calvin, when asked if the local history made reading more interesting, stated, "My mom said we are part Indian. So I guess I knew some stuff a little. I am glad we don't bury people in hills [Indian mounds] any more." The Week 5 journal entry explored his favorite reading topics. He discussed reading about sports and learning about workout techniques and proper diet and exercise for athletes. Unless given a specific topic, Calvin wrote, and wanted to talk, mostly about sports. Overall, Calvin explained in his Week 8 entry that his views of reading changed "a little." He expounded, "Reading can teach some things, but you have to go find the information and I don't go to the library much. I know that I can read better, I just don't always want to."

Researcher Observations

Calvin has the interest and the potential to become a stronger student; however, he is involved with a group of young men who do not view academic intelligence highly. During the first few weeks of the study, Calvin sat quietly trying hard to appear bored. He often draped one

arm over the back of the chair and refused to make eye contact with the researcher. He completed the assignments and was never rude, just demonstrative enough to indicate that he was not having fun. Because of his interest in sports, it was interesting to watch him pretend to be uninterested when the participants were discussing extreme sports. It is the researcher's opinion that Calvin wanted to get excited about the topic and contribute his point of view. He, however, remained quiet.

During week 5 the study group was doing some research in the library. The librarian observed Calvin eating candy and reprimanded him in front of the group. Calvin looked at the others and began to grin. When no other participant grinned back, Calving mumbled an apology and threw the candy away. No one said anything else about the matter. After that, Calvin began to initiate more dialogue in the discussions. It was as if being smart was fine with the participant group. He appeared to enjoy being a part of the study and discussions.

After other participants began to enjoy the program, Calvin seemed to relax and get involved at a deeper level. He read aloud when asked and by Week 6 was even volunteering to read or find additional materials to contribute to the conversation.

During the times when Calvin was alone with the researcher, he almost transformed into a student who was hungry to learn. He sought approval of his reading, asked if he were saying words correctly, and inquired about assignments. When the other participants entered the room, Calvin retreated to a safe emotional distance from the researcher. Even though he interacted more with members of the study, he did not appear to become comfortable interacting with the researcher in front of other students.

Calvin has been exposed to literature at home. Having older siblings may have contributed to his knowledge of books. He stated in the Interest and Attitude Inventory there are

a number of books in his home. Again, it appears that he does not want to admit to his intellect or his curiosity.

During Week 8 Calvin told the researcher that he did not want to be complimented in front of Dr. French's class when the study was over. When asked why, he said that his friends would not like him if they thought he had "gotten smart on 'em." The researcher honored his request.

In direct opposition with his peer group, Calvin demonstrated an increase in his motivation to read. His journals, Interest and Attitude Inventory responses, and Reading Usefulness Evaluations combined with the researcher's observations clearly demonstrate Calvin's increased motivation. In concert with his motivational gains, Calvin's reading ability increased indicated by his scores on the Classroom Reading Inventory.

Donald

Donald is a 13-year-old eighth grade student who lives with both parents and two younger sisters. He is interested in football and feels that he has the talent to play college ball. At home is responsible for washing dishes and cleaning his room. He appears to have a happy home life even though he complains that he has too many sisters.

Dr. French believes that "Donald is much smarter than his grades and behavior indicate." She explained that during Sustained Silent Reading Donald often gets distracted and talks to others instead of concentrating on reading.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

In Donald's initial Interest and Attitude Inventory, he indicated that he would prefer drawing to writing, reading, talking, or listening to stories. He stated that drawing was the most fun "because I can draw real good." Donald indicated that he owns no books of his own, no one

reads to him at home and he does not read to anyone. His favorite book is the magazine, "Vibe."

After the eight weeks, Donald completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory again. His answers remained generally the same. He still contends that no one at home reads to him, yet he did indicate that he would read to his younger sister "sometimes when [he felt] like it." He still preferred drawing but "kinda like[s] to hear somebody do the reading – only if the story is a good one." "Vibe" is still his favorite magazine, but he also "really started to get into "Sports Illustrated" since it's about football."

Classroom Reading Inventory

TABLE 3.16

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Donald)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
% Correct	Pre	100	100	95	90	90	85	80	65		
	Post	100	100	100	100	100	90	85	90	80	75

The Classroom Reading Inventory pretest suggests Donald's vocabulary level to be at a high fifth grade level. At the completion of the study, his posttest suggests his vocabulary grade level increased to a low eighth grade level.

The Classroom Reading Inventory pretest (Table 3.17) evaluated Donald's independent level (Ind) of significant word errors (SIG WR) to be at the first grade level while his instructional level (Inst) reached the sixth grade level. He reached the frustration (Frus) for significant word errors at the seventh grade level. His independent comprehension level was first grade and his instructional level reached sixth grade. His comprehension level reached frustration at the eighth grade.

TABLE 3.17

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Donald)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pre	SIG WR	Inst	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus	Frus
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Frus
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Ind
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst

His Classroom Reading Inventory posttest revealed significant gains in both areas. His independent level of significant word errors increased to the fourth grade level and his comprehension level increased to a seventh grade level. Because the Classroom Reading Inventory measured through the eighth grade, his instructional and frustration levels could not be measured.

The evidence suggests that Donald's increase in reading level was in part due to his interest in performing well on the posttest. Comparison between the pretest and posttest suggests Donald may not have taken the pretest as seriously as he did the posttest. This conclusion agrees with Dr. French's assessment of the student's attitude toward schoolwork.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

TABLE 3.18

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Donald)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	2	3	3	4	2	5	3	3	4	3	1	3	2	2	4	2	2	1	2	2
Post	2	3	5	1	2	5	3	2	5	4	4	5	4	3	5	5	3	2	4	3

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation, employing the 5-degree Likert scale method, was administered to Donald. The pretest and posttest responses were compared. (See Table 3.18)

The responses for items 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 demonstrate changes in Donald's opinion of reading usefulness.

Item 3 asked whether the participant read every day. Donald's answer changed from "Maybe" to "yes, A Lot." Item 4 revealed his opinion regarding whether reading is only something for school. Initially, he said "Yes, A Little." After the eight week study, he chose "No, Not at All." Item 9 asks about reading at home. Donald's posttest answer differs from his pretest answer by one degree from "Yes, A Little" to "Yes, A Lot." Item 11, regarding reading in order to drive, demonstrates a 3 degree change from "Not, Not At All" to "Yes, A Little." Item 14 addressing reading and playing sports denotes a change of 1 degree from "No, Not Much" to "Maybe." Item 18 asks, "Do you enjoy reading if you can choose the reading material?" Donald's pretest answer was "No, Not Much" and his posttest answer was "Yes, A Little". Item 19 refers to enjoyment of stories about real people. Donald's answer changed from "No, Not Much" to "Yes, A Little." All of these answers signify a positive change in his opinion of the usefulness of reading in these areas.

However, the following answers reveal a lessening in the usefulness of reading in the following areas. Item 8 refers to the importance of reading in the community. Donald's pretest answer was "Maybe" and his posttest answer decreased to "No, Not Much." For item 10 with regard to the necessity of reading in grocery shopping, Donald's answer lowers from "Yes, A Little" to "Maybe." and Item 12, his referring to the necessity of reading with regard to a checking or savings account changed from "Yes, A Lot" to "Maybe," and item 13 regarding reading in order to cook demonstrates a two degree change from "Yes, A Little" to "No, Not Much." Item 15 asks if reading is necessary to sing. Donald originally answered "Yes, A Lot." His posttest answer decreased by one degree to "Yes, A Little." Item 16 refers to the amount of

reading necessary for using the internet. The pretest answer was "Yes, A Lot," and his posttest answer was "No, Not Much." Item 17 asked the participant if he learned from assigned readings in class. The pretest answer was "No, Not Much" while the posttest answer was "No, Not At All." Item 20 refers to enjoyment of stories about made up people. Again, Donald's answer changed 1 degree from "Maybe" to "No, Not Much."

Journals

Journal writing appeared to be difficult for Donald. It was not his ability in questions as much as his concern over someone reading what he wrote. He did not want to be identified as liking school too much.

When asked if he was a good reader, Week 1, Donald replied, "Yes, I guess so. I can read what I need to most of the time." For the Week 2 prompt addressing the importance of reading, he reported, "Reading is kind of fun." He further allowed, in Week 5, that he would like to read "if he had some books and if it was dark outside," he would much rather play X-Box or football.

The journal about the effects of propaganda was based upon Weeks 4 and 5. When asked if his new knowledge of propaganda affected him, he stated, "I don't really care too much. I buy what I like."

The Week 6 journal prompt inquired what he read over the weekend. "I only read what interests me. If the school assignment ain't interesting I don't read it." At the end of Week 7 he was asked if his views of reading had changed. He did not address the question with his answer, but his response was telling. "Reading ain't cool to my friends so I don't think I should read much." It led the researcher to believe that he might enjoy reading more than he admits. The

final journal prompt asked whether after the eight week program, he thought he was a better reader. "I guess so, I learned some new things."

Researcher Observations

Donald can comprehend and read at a higher level than he demonstrates. Throughout the program, he asked thoughtful questions. He seemed to be more able than many of the others to gather information from multiple sources and draw conclusions. It was obvious that he was attempting to learn more about the subjects being discussed. He performed much better when the topic interested him especially if he could choose his own reading materials for the assignment.

His oral reading skills were hampered by poor enunciation. He does not complete the sounds at the beginning or end of words. It is almost like a stream of mumbling. The researcher did not notice any visible hindrances or any signs of hearing impairments. There was no mention of speech therapy in his file. Regardless of his unclear speech, he appeared to have no difficulties spelling. He quickly grasped the main ideas and was able to draw conclusions citing details in the passages.

Donald's responses on the Interest and Attitude Inventory, the Reading Usefulness Evaluation and his journals indicate that his motivation to read grew minimally, if at all. The researcher's observations content he has great abilities, however, does not take advantage of them. However, he did demonstrate gains in reading ability as demonstrated by his Classroom Reading Inventory scores.

Samantha

Samantha is a 13-year-old eighth grade student who lives with her parents, one older sister, one younger brother and two younger sisters. Her family appears to be very close. She

prefers to spend time with her family than with anyone else. She enjoys eating out, shopping and going to the movies. She has chores at home and helps her siblings with theirs.

Dr. French stated that Samantha was very immature in thought and deed. Samantha appears to be almost fearful in a crowd of her peers. She has two friends who watch out for her and "translate" what is going on in the classroom i.e. homework, assignments, etc.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

In the initial Interest and Attitude Inventory, Samantha indicated that she preferred drawing to writing, reading, talking, or listening to stories "because it is fun and you can always make pretty pictures." At home, she and her family have "reading books for little kids, a math book, a reading book, and the U.S. Book." Her favorite books are those about *Arthur*. When asked why, she replied, "He's active and D.W. always messes with him. It's a cartoon."

Samantha stated that her mother reads to her at home. She most often requests scary books because she likes to be scared when someone is there with her. It appears that she feels the comfort and security of her mother's presence when she is scared. She does not read to her siblings. Her mother has subscriptions to "Jet," "Ebony," and "The Advocate," yet, Samantha is not interested in any of them.

After the eight-week program was completed, Samantha again completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory. She indicated that drawing and reading were her favorites now "because [she] can read books about art and drawing and learning how to make other pictures." She has not purchased any art books, but has checked a couple of books out of the school library. She stated that she does read to her younger brothers and sister, but "only the easy books. No hard stuff." Her mother continues to read to her almost daily.

Classroom Reading Inventory

TABLE 3.19

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Samantha)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
% Correct	Pre	95	100	95	100	90	85	65		
	Post	95	100	100	95	95	90	80	75	60

The Classroom Reading Inventory pretest (Table 3.19) suggests Samantha's vocabulary level at Week 0 to be at a high fourth grade level. After eight weeks of the Life-Application Learning Instructional Program, she was asked to complete the Classroom Reading Inventory again. Her posttest demonstrates a gain in sight words to the low sixth grade.

TABLE 3.20

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Samantha)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus		
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus		
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind	Inst	Frus	Frus
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus

The Classroom Reading Inventory pretest (Table 3.20) inferred Samantha's independent level (Ind) of significant word errors (SIG WR) reached the second grade while her instructional (Inst) level reached the fourth grade. She reached frustration at the fifth grade level. Her scores for comprehension (Comp) copy her scores for significant word errors.

Samantha's posttest scores infer a minimum amount of progress. The independent reading ability of significant word errors remains at the second grade level even with her scoring at the independent level at the fourth grade. Her instructional level for significant word errors

proposes proficiency through the fifth grade. At the sixth grade level, Samantha becomes frustrated.

Her comprehension scores on the posttest fair a bit higher. Her independent scores demonstrate success through the third grade and her instructional scores reach as far as sixth grade. She reached her frustration level at the seventh grade.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

TABLE 3.21

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Samantha)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	2	2	3	4	2	3	2	2	3	4	2	1	1	1	3	3	4	4	2	5
Post	3	4	5	2	2	2	3	2	4	4	3	3	3	2	4	3	5	5	3	5

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation pretest was administered to Samantha during Week 0 and the posttest administered during Week 9. Changes in her responses are noted in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 19. (See Table 3.21.) When asked about daily reading, Item 1, her initial answer was "No, Not Much." Her posttest answer was "Maybe." Item 2 asked about the importance of reading. She first replied, "No, Not Much," then her answer changed by week 9 to "Yes, A Little." Item 3 referred to the need for reading in every day life. Initially she answered, "Maybe," and later chose "Yes, A Lot." Item 4 asked whether she believed reading was only something for school. Her first answer was "Yes, A Little." Her final answer was "No, Not At All."

Samantha's opinion as to the need for reading for a doctor's visit, Item 7, changed from "No, Not Much" to "Maybe." When asked whether Samantha reads at home her posttest answer increased from "Maybe" to "Yes, A Little." With regard to the necessity of reading for managing a checking or savings account, Item 12, and cooking dinner, Item 13, Samantha

indicated a change from "No, Not At All" to "Maybe." The usefulness of reading in sports, Item 14, and in singing, Item 15, increased by one degree with a change from "No, Not At All" to "Not, Not Much" and a change from "Yes, A Little" to "Yes, A Lot" respectively. Samantha's pretest and posttest answers changed by one degree from "Yes, A Little" to "Yes, A Lot" when asked about the extent to learning based upon classroom reading assignments, Item 18. Item 19 inquired whether Samantha likes reading true stories about real people. Her pretest answer was "No, Not Much" and her posttest answer was "Maybe."

Item 6 was the only answer indicating a decrease in the usefulness of reading. It asked about reading usefulness in regard to reading a map. Samantha's pretest answer was "Maybe" and her posttest answer changed to "No, Not Much."

Journals

Samantha did not seem to mind writing journal entries. She appeared more comfortable in a setting where she had more control than when she was in a group discussion or recalling information from a passage.

Samantha's Week 1 journal asked if she believed she was a good reader. Her response was, "It's hard and reading and finding answers in a book take too long. I don't get what they be saying." However in Week 2, when asked 'Is reading important to you?' she replied, "Yes, I know that when I go to college I will have to know how to read. I am gonna be a nurse and help people."

In Week 4, the journal prompt inquired about reading useful outside of school. "I guess so," she responded, "but I like to read when I don't have nothing else to do." One of the Week 7 prompts asked Samantha if her views of reading changed. She very honestly answered, "Sorta, I know reading is important so I can learn more. It is hard and I have problems understanding."

The second prompt for Week 7 was based upon a lesson about laws. 'How did the law activity affect your reading?' was the prompt. Samantha's response was, "It is sad when parent don't take care of they kids. My mom and dad make us mind manners. When kids get bad, the parents should be punished to. I am glad when they [parents] get in trouble." The final prompt in Week 8 asked, 'After this program, do you think you are a better reader?' "Yes, I can sound out words better if they aren't too big."

Researcher Observations

Samantha is a very pleasant, but extremely timid student who appeared to be intimidated easily. Even though she remained reserved throughout the study, her demeanor was warm and friendly. She smiled easily and good-naturedly completed the assignment to the best of her ability. Even when she was befuddled by an assignment, she never appeared to be annoyed, just confused.

One reason for her timidity may be her pronounced lisp. She speaks very softly and is often hard to understand. The fact that she attends speech therapy appears to be a source of embarrassment for her. Samantha also appears almost fearful of attempting new things. Her insecurities seem to inhibit her opportunities for new experiences. If she were not given a specific assignment providing detailed instructions, Samantha would remain seated and quite until someone noticed. It is the researcher's opinion that Samantha would like to increase her academic abilities and life experiences, however, she is too shy or too fearful to initiate any type of dialogue.

Oral reading in the group setting was often appeared uncomfortable for Samantha. During the course of the study, she gradually increased the lengths of her oral reading. She frequently stumbled over words, but was encouraged by others. It appeared to the researcher that

the group felt the need to protect her – as if she were too fragile to complete the task alone. While reading, Samantha would often stop and look at the researcher as if to ask for affirmation. The researcher would encourage her and Samantha would read on.

Dr. French commented that Samantha was more like a lower elementary child than an eighth grade student. She shared with Dr. French that she and her sisters frequently play with dolls and design clothes for them. Her personal conversations, which are rare, tend to confirm her immaturity. Besides playing with dolls, Samantha enjoys drawing. Her pictures are of scenes, again, typically drawn by lower elementary students, depicting crude representation of a family or a house and a tree. During the Christmas season, she drew dozens of Christmas ornaments with the pack of colors she kept in her purse.

Samantha became nervous when she was asked to complete the evaluation instruments, especially the Classroom Reading Inventory. As the reading level increased she wiggled her hands and shook them as if to shake something off. Frequently the researcher asked her if she wanted to stop the evaluation. She would ask if she was finished. She was repeatedly told she could quit at any time. She would sit quietly for a period of about 30 seconds and then ask to continue. When she became nervous during the participant sessions, she would begin to wiggle her hands and, as if concerned that someone would notice, she would place her hands in her lap.

Based upon Samantha's responses to the Interest and Attitude Inventory, the Reading Usefulness Evaluation, and her journals, one may infer Samantha's motivation to read increased slightly. The researcher's observations also support this conclusion.

It is the opinion of the researcher, evidenced by her responses to the evaluative instruments, that her reading ability increased as did her reading engagement. It is the

researcher's prediction that even though Samantha demonstrated the ability to at the fifth grade level, she will continue to choose books beneath her ability.

Antoine

Antoine is a 14-year-old eighth grade student who lives with his mother, father and 2 younger brothers. At home he enjoys watching television and playing video games with his family and friends. His only responsibility at home is to keep his room clean. Dr. French says that Antoine is very quiet, has a good heart, but has some difficulty in school.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

Antoine completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory during Week 0. He stated that given a choice he would choose reading over writing, talking, listening to stories or drawing because "[he] likes to read." He said that he has five books at home, but he could not remember the names of any of them. His mother reads to him often. He does not care what she reads. "She always picks a good one."

After the eight weeks were completed, Antoine again completed the Interest and Attitude Inventory. Antoine remained dedicated to choosing reading above all. He indicated that he had purchased new books; however, his mother read them to him more than he read them on his own. He did share that at times, he read one page and his mother read the other.

Classroom Reading Inventory

TABLE 3.22

Classroom Reading Inventory – Word Lists (Antoine)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
% Correct	Pre	100	90	90	75	60				
	Post	100	95	100	80	75	70			

Antoine's Classroom Reading Inventory pretest (Table 3.22) confirmed his lack of vocabulary knowledge, indicating his proficiency level was the second grade. His posttest scores (Table 3.22) demonstrate a gain of one grade level, placing him at a high third grade level.

TABLE 3.23

Classroom Reading Inventory – Graded Paragraphs (Antoine)

Grade Level		PP	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	SIG WR	Ind	Inst	Inst	Ind	Inst	Frus			
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Frus	Frus			
Post	SIG WR	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Frus	Frus	
	Comp	Ind	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst	Inst	Frus	

The Classroom Reading Inventory graded paragraph assessment pretest (Table 3.23) for Antoine suggested his independent (Ind) level of significant word errors (SIG WR) to be at Pre-Primer with his instructional (Ins) level to be a high first grade level. Antoine reached frustration (Frus) at the fourth grade. His comprehension (Comp) scores indicated his independent (Ind) level to be at the second grade. He demonstrated frustration (Frus) at the third grade level.

His posttest scores (Table 3.23) reveal an overall gain. His independent (Ind) score on the graded paragraphs increased to the second grade and his instructional (Ins) level strengthened to the fourth grade. At the fifth grade, Antoine reached his frustration (frus) level.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

TABLE 3.24

Reading Usefulness Evaluation (Antoine)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pre	1	1	4	2	1	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	4
Post	2	3	4	2	4	4	3	4	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	4

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation pretest was given to Antoine during Week 0 and the posttest was administered in Week 9. Changes in his responses are noted in items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. (See Table 3.27.) Item 1 asked if he read every day. His initial response was "No, not at all" and his posttest response was "No, Not Much." Item 2 asked if reading was important to him. Initially his answer was "No, Not At All." His posttest response, "Maybe" demonstrated a difference of 2 degrees. Item 5 inquired whether one needed to read to go to a restaurant. His posttest score varied by three degrees, changing from "No, Not At All" to "Yes, A Little."

Item 6, addressing reading in relation to a map reveals a one degree difference from "Maybe" to "Yes, A Little." A two degree difference is indicated in Item 7. Antoine's answer changed from "No, Not Much" to "Maybe" in reference to reading to go the doctor's office. Item 8 asked whether one needed to read to be part of a community. Initially, Antoine answered "No, Not Much," but changed his response in the posttest to "Yes, A Little." Item 10 with regard to reading to go the grocery store yielded a pretest response of "No, Not At All." His posttest answer was "No, Not Much," an increase of one degree. When asked if one needed reading to drive a car, Item 11, Antoine first stated "No, Not Much," but responded "Maybe" in the posttest.

Item 12 addressed the need for reading to have a checking or savings account. His initial response was "No, Not At All" while his posttest response was "No, Not Much" indicating a change of one degree. Item 15 demonstrated a change of one degree from "No Not Much" to "Maybe" when asked about the usefulness of reading in order to sing. Item 16 questioned the ability to read in order to use the internet. His pretest answer was "No, Not Much" followed by his posttest answer of "Yes, A Little." Item 17 asked whether he learned from the assigned

readings in the classroom. He responded "Maybe" in the pretest and "Yes, A Little" in the posttest. Item 18 asked if he enjoyed reading if he could choose the reading material. He first stated "Maybe" and later replied "Yes, A Little." Item 19 questioned whether he liked true stories. His pretest answer was "No, Not Much" and his posttest answer was "Yes, A Little."

Journals

Antoine's Week 1 journal posed the question "Do you think you are a good reader?" He stated very clearly that he was not a good reader, but he did like to know things. When asked in Week 2 whether reading was important, he responded, "Yes, reading is important for your life. I wish I could read better. My mom would be more proud of me and I would make better grades."

For one of the Week 3 prompts, students were asked what they did when not in school and if that activity involved reading. "I like to play X-Box and go to the mall. Sometimes I like to play basketball if my friends can come over. I could read about the games and score higher. Sometimes I see magazines about [X-Box] games and I look at them. Mostly, I just play and learn that way." The Week 5 prompt asked what the students chose to read. Antoine said, "I would like to read about famous basketball players. That way I would know how they practice."

During Week 6 the students were assigned an internet research project addressing a concern in the school. When asked if researching the material encouraged them to read more, Antoine replied, "I don't know much about computers. It was hard to get information." In Week 7, the students were asked if their views about reading had changed. Antoine wrote, "I still feel the same way about reading. It is important and hard for me."

The final journal prompt asked, 'After this eight week program, do you think you are a better reader?' His response was "I learned that you can read all kinds of things and learn about

different things. It is all important. School teaches most stuff but you can learn on your own too."

Researcher Observations

When Antoine was initially told that he would be part of this project, he appeared very distrustful. After being informed that he was not obligated to remain in the program, he appeared to relax.

Once the evaluation procedures began, he cooperated completely. He maintained a positive attitude throughout. Antoine is very quiet and he took his time answering questions. It appears that he thinks very carefully before he answers. He wants to say the right thing.

He is aware of him academic limitations and it appears to bother him even though he tried to appear rather nonchalant about it.

His inability to read and comprehend materials exceeding a second grade level indicates his lack of reading ability, yet he appears to have compensated for his lack of reading skills by his class participation. He does receive assistance at home with his homework.

Overall Summary of the Study

The natural desire of many adolescents to participate in creating something larger than themselves can also be a motivating factor supporting their work on improving reading (Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993). The participants liked being a part of this group. They appeared to make it a mission to determine what other students would like and dislike in a reading program. As much as some of the students did not want others to know how well they were progressing, among the group, they were proud of their accomplishments.

In response to the first research question, 'How will incorporating life-application learning into the middle school curriculum impact reading motivation of the participating

students?' the overall data strongly suggests a positive impact has occurred. All of the participants, except Donald, demonstrated a heightened sense of motivation to read.

In response to the second research question, 'How will incorporation life-application learning into the middle school curriculum impact reading levels of the participating students?' the overall data demonstrates that each student increased in ability.

The overall impact of the integration of life-application learning into the middle school curriculum appears to be a positive one. By utilizing reading skills for understanding materials addressing their personal interests, exemplified the necessity for continued learning. Students' attitudes about reading being important outside the academic area seemed to inspire them to pay attention to the lessons, now realizing that the information was not just for the reading textbook, but for life.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Unfortunately, there is no quick fix for reading difficulties. Over two decades of research has shown that reading is a complex cognitive and social practice. In building reading aptitude, there is no 'skills-only' approach that can substitute for extensive reading. On the contrary, repeated studies have demonstrated that instruction in isolated grammar, decoding, or comprehension skills may have little or no impact on students' activity while actually reading (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). Reading in isolation compartmentalizes tasks that must be applied in concert. All middle school readers, and especially struggling readers, need to view reading as a skill in total not in fragments. By integrating the multiple techniques into valuable proficiency, students become empowered and therefore exercise the skillfulness necessary to succeed in the classroom and in the real world.

If students are going to be able to succeed in school and beyond, they must be willing and able to work through and make sense of even some poorly written texts. Educators have the responsibility to help students learn and internalize strategies for persisting with and understanding texts that students perceive as boring or irrelevant. Once students are given methods for comprehending difficult and seemingly boring texts, they often find these texts more interesting. Students do like to learn; they do want to become competent and knowledgeable. Instituting life-application learning instructional methods provides students with the tools required for success. They are able to see reading as a function providing the reward of knowledge.

Two motivational issues are often raised in discussions of reading strategies. First, research on self-efficacy for learning proposes that students have beliefs about their abilities to

achieve the task at hand. They have already formulated an assessment of their mastery of the skills needed and likewise they have evaluated whether the knowledge to be gained is worth the effort. These beliefs influence how much energy students expend and, by extension, the degree of their success (Bandura, 1977). Thus, students with high self-efficacy for learning are likely to expend the effort to learn new strategies and to incorporate those techniques. Conversely, students who have little or no confidence in their reading abilities are not likely to continue to try to learn strategies they do not think will help them.

Another construct related to students' motivation for learning is known as utility value. Utility value refers to students' judgments about whether academic tasks will help them accomplish their goals (Pintrich, Marx & Boyle, 1993). High utility value increases the likelihood that students will be motivated to use what they learn. On the other hand, low utility value decreases that likelihood. Therefore, if students believe that increased reading abilities are beneficial to them and they believe that strategies offered in the classroom will help them accomplish this goal, they are more likely to invest the time and energy to learn the strategies and use them. If, however, students do not believe that becoming better readers is useful, or if they do not believe the strategies demonstrated in the classroom will be helpful, then they are unlikely to value strategies or use them.

In sum, several factors influence students' motivation to learn and use new reading strategies. Students who have high self-efficacy, high utility value, and have embraced the life long value of learning to read are likely to put forth the effort. These factors can exert a strong influence on students' responses to instruction.

Although students' motivation can influence their responses to instruction, instruction can also influence students' motivation. There is a reciprocal relationship between motivation

and instruction. Burns (1999) suggests that motivation and success are inner-related; however, a struggling reader would find it tedious to remain motivated without achieving success. By demonstrating the universal serviceability of well-established reading skills, life-application learning instructional programs can provide an invaluable reinforcement in the reading classroom.

Summary

Two questions were addressed in this study: 1) How did incorporating life-application learning into the middle school curriculum impact reading motivation of the participating students; and 2) How did incorporating life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impact the reading levels of the participating students? To determine what impact, if any, took place, the Interest and Attitude Inventory pre and posttests, the Classroom Reading Inventory pre- and posttests, and the Reading Usefulness Evaluation pre- and posttests, combined with weekly journals, and researcher observations were employed to gather data.

The eight eighth-grade participants who voluntarily agreed to be part of the study had been identified by their teacher as struggling students, or students who were performing below grade level. Prior to the study, these students were not considered to be readers, scored several grades below eighth grade on standardized tests, and demonstrated a lack of engagement in the classroom. The results of the evaluative tools demonstrate the impact of the life-application learning instructional program.

Interest and Attitude Inventory

By gaining "valuable insights into the student's personality, attitude, value system, peer relations, and perhaps to some extent, cultural and environmental factors," (Cheek & Collins, 2000, p.107) through the Interest and Attitude Inventory, the researcher was able to determine

whether a change occurred between the pretest, given during Week 0, and the posttest, given during Week 9. Of particular interest were the questions concerning reading and language. Students' responses addressing the priority of reading, ownership of reading materials, favorite books, time spent reading, and persons read with were compared and evaluated to explore the impact of the study.

As indicated in the Interest and Attitude pretest, of the eight participants, only three - Ronald, Calvin and Samantha - indicated being involved in independent reading. Robert, Ronald, Rachel and Samantha were the only four who owned at least three books, Samantha was the only participant who regularly read to someone in the home, and Ronald, Rachel and Calvin occasionally read to someone in the home. Antoine and Samantha were the only participants read to by a parent, sibling or relative in the home; however, Calvin stated that at times a family member may read something aloud, yet not specifically to him.

After the eight weeks of the Life Application Learning Instructional Program study, students indicated that an increase in the amount of time they spent reading had taken place. Seven students - Robert, Michelle, Ronald, Rachel, Calvin, Samantha, and to some degree Antoine - said they were involved in independent reading. Four students - Robert, Ronald, Rachel and Calvin - said they either owned at least three books or had increased a personal library beyond three books; however, Michelle preferred magazines and Samantha stated she checked books out of the school library. Seven students - Robert, Michelle, Rachel, Ronald, Calvin, Donald and Samantha - have become or have increased their involvement in reading to someone in the home, and Robert and Rachel are now read to by a parent, sibling or relative in the home while Samantha and Antoine stated they continue to be read to by someone in the home. These findings demonstrate an increase in reading activity.

Classroom Reading Inventory

Results of the Classroom Reading Inventory demonstrated an increase in reading ability for all participants. Comparing the pretest scores and the posttest scores of the word list section of the inventory demonstrated an increase of three grades levels for two students - Donald and Ronald; an increase of two grade levels for three students - Robert, Michelle, and Samantha; and an increase of one grade level for three students - Rachel, Calvin, and Antoine. Therefore, the average increase of word recognition is 1.87 grades per participant.

The pretest and posttest scores of the graded paragraphs evaluating oral reading and comprehension abilities also demonstrated an overall increase in the participants' reading ability. Two students - Ronald and Antoine – demonstrated an increase in independent reading by three grade levels and five students - Robert, Michelle, Rachel, Calvin, and Donald - each gained two levels of independent reading. Samantha did not make any gains in independent reading. With regard to instructional levels of reading, Michelle's score demonstrated a gain of six grade levels; Rachel's score demonstrated an increase of four grade levels; Antoine demonstrated a gain of two grade levels; and Samantha and Robert demonstrated a gain of one grade level for instructional reading. Because the Classroom Reading Inventory did not measure reading ability above the eighth grade, an accurate reading ability assessment of Ronald, Calvin, and Donald could not be made. The average gain for independent reading was 1.87 grades and the average gain for instructional reading could not be determined.

Reading Usefulness Evaluation

Comparing the pretest and posttest responses of the Reading Usefulness Evaluation, one can allow that a margin of growth occurred in the students' assessment of the beneficial nature of

reading. Of the eight participants, all but one, Donald, indicated an increase in personal value for reading.

The Reading Usefulness Evaluation, employing a 5 - degree Likert scale, consisted of 20 items. These 20 items multiplied by the eight participants yielded 160 responses. Of those, 27 items, or 17%, indicated a positive change of two degrees or more, and 44 items, or 27%, indicated a positive change of one degree. Therefore 71 items, or 44%, indicated a positive change. Nine items, or 6%, indicated a negative change; of those nine, eight were attributed to Donald. No change occurred in the 80 items, or 50%, remaining.

Of the 80 items remaining unchanged, 52, or 32% of the total number of questions, revealed responses of "Yes, A Lot," demonstrating the highest degree of reading usefulness. Thirteen items, or 8%, of the unchanged responses demonstrated the second highest degree of usefulness, "Yes, A Little." Five items, or 3%, of the unchanged responses were "Maybe," the middle response. Eight items, or 5%, of the unchanged responses were "No, Not Much" and two items, or 1%, of the unchanged responses were "No, Not At All."

Journals

During the course of the eight-week study, the participants were given 12 journal prompts. Some of the journal prompts were directly related to a specific activity and others inquired about the participants' habits and attitudes concerning reading. As previously stated in Chapter 4, the journal responses were short. Combining Dr. French's opinions, the students' conversation addressing journals, and the lack of writing for each response, it may be determined that these participants, with the exception of Rachel, are resistant to writing. However, the responses seemed to indicate that a growing level of reading engagement took place.

The Week 1 journal prompt was "Do you think you are a good reader?" Seven of the participants said 'No.' Rachel and Samantha claimed reading was too hard; Ronald wrote he didn't know the words; and Calvin and Samantha both addressed that reading was for looking up answers in school. Donald stated "yes, I guess so." All of the journal entries portrayed rather negative feelings about reading and their reading abilities. It appears that the students may have begun the study with the idea that reading was just for answering questions.

The Week 2 journal prompt was "Is reading important?" Everyone agreed that reading was important. Michelle, Rachel, Samantha and Antoine referred to the importance of reading for school, jobs and the future. Calvin stated that it was only important at school; Ronald claims reading is something "smart people" do; and Donald said that reading was 'kinda' fun.

The Week 3 journal prompt was, "What do you do when you are not at school? Does it require reading?" The two students who linked reading and their out of school activities were Calvin and Antoine. Calvin said he learned more about extreme sports in our class and applied new techniques to his football game. Antoine said that he "read an article about X-Box."

The Week 3 journal prompt was, "Did studying about Native American history in your area make reading more interesting?" Most of the students stated they enjoyed this lesson and wanted to know more about the history of their area. Donald said he didn't care much about it.

The Week 4 journal prompt was, " Is reading useful outside of school?" All of the participants stated that reading was important. Their reasons included playing computer games, going to restaurants, doing homework, shopping, looking up phone numbers, reading notes from friends, surfing the internet, reading about famous people, learning about fashion, and knowing the rules in sports.

The Week 5 journal prompt was "What would you like to read?" The students again gave a variety of responses. Specific titles given were *Jet, Ebony, Essence*, and *Sports Illustrated.* Other topics were the internet articles about computer games, fashion magazines, action and adventure stories, and sports related materials.

The second Week 5 journal prompt was "Did understanding propaganda affect the way you read?" The students generally responded to the affirmative, noting disgust in being tricked, understanding the importance of reading the labels, and realizing that a famous spokesperson does not make the item necessarily better. Donald said he did not care about propaganda since he bought whatever he wanted to anyway.

The Week 6 journal prompt was "What did you read over the weekend?" The answers varied from 'nothing' to magazine articles. The second Week 6 journal prompt was "Did researching materials about your school concern encourage you to read more?" All of the students responded stating they did not realize that other students felt the same way. Rachel was unsure of which opinion to believe and Antoine had trouble navigating the computer. Most interesting was Michelle's. Her concern was having a mentally challenged sister. She appeared to have learned more about her sister's diagnosis.

The Week 7 prompt was "Have your views of reading changed?" Seven participants indicated increased interest in reading, stating they were better able to read and comprehend. Ronald included that reading was not just for school but for life. Only Donald had a negative response stating reading wasn't 'cool' so he did not read.

The second Week 7 journal prompt was "How did the law activity affect your reading?" All of the students strongly responded to this journal. Rachel and Ronald addressed children breaking the law and being held responsible; Robert, Antoine and Samantha discussed the

importance of knowing the law and obeying it; and Donald questioned why lawyers would defend the guilty.

The Week 8 journal prompt was "After this eight-week program, do you think you are a better reader?" All of the students claimed to be better readers. Robert admitted that he worked harder to learn new things and his grades have improved; however he did not want to read all the time. He added that he considered reading the newspaper every day. Michelle and Donald indicated that even though they had learned a great deal and were better readers, they would probably not read every day. Michelle has 'other things to do' and Donald's friends 'don't think it's cool.' Ronald stated that he was a 'much better' reader and that he would use this information in the future. "It's not so hard when you know how."

Calvin reported that reading can 'teach a person a lot.' Samantha said her reading had gotten better because she could sound out new words. Antoine learned about "all kinds of things" he could read. "They are all important. School teaches you but you can learn on your own."

Researcher Observations

During Week 1 the students appeared unsure of themselves when asked to find magazine and newspaper articles related to extreme sports. They took a long time gathering different sources. Even when the sources were located, the information gathered was based upon the pictures more than the text of the articles. They depended greatly on the assistance of the researcher to repeatedly provide specific directions.

When asked to incorporate vocabulary words in sentences about their own lives, the students appeared to struggle to create situations enabling the use of the words. Students appeared to give up unless coached and encouraged by the researcher.

The participants began to become somewhat involved when the discussion focused on local Native American history. Each participant appeared to have knowledge of at least one aspect of the conversation.

In Week 2 the students compared the main character of the novel, *High Elk*, to themselves, focusing on thoughts and experiences of an adolescent. The students hesitantly participated by sharing similar events in their own lives about school rules, family expectations, siblings, and their quests for greater independence. The participants commented on the similarities between themselves and the characters. The idea that a character in the book experienced the same feelings and concerns appeared to surprise them.

Again, the students engaged in vocabulary activities. By this point, the students were beginning to work together to build the vocabulary lists and were astounded at the amount of words they already knew.

The Week 3 assignment focused on students' paraphrasing of events in the novel and supporting their analysis with passages in the novel. Linking the novel events to actual and possible local Native American happenings further extended their processing abilities. The students asked a number of 'what if' questions, predicted what it must have been like 100 or 200 years ago, and questioned reasons for the changes. Students created character sketches of the people in the novel and of themselves, predicting how they would respond if they were faced with the same situations. Through this activity they toggled between situating themselves in the novel and incorporating the basic events of the novel into their own worlds.

The participants' responses to the Week 4 propaganda activities appeared to raise a sense of consumer consciousness. The students aggressively sought to distinguish between facts and opinions in the advertisements. They worked together and independently attempted to discover

what made the buyer purchase the item. The knowledge of propaganda techniques and their ability to decipher the advertisement appeared to build their reading confidence and entice their aspirations to actively pursue personal knowledge that was relevant to them as a consumer.

During Week 5 students continued to address the issues of propaganda, figurative language and symbolism in various advertisements couched in pictures and text. The idea that the participants had their own figurative language and symbols further added to their sense of success as a reader and language user.

The sequencing activity utilizing the gumbo recipe appeared to strengthen their acceptance of the fact that learning within the school directly affects activities outside of the academic arena. Each student discussed the variety of ingredients, thus learning new words. They each explained the necessity of following the directions in order to allow the right amount of cooking time per ingredient or combination of ingredients. The participants commented on the amount of knowledge and strategy required to follow a recipe, create a meal, and establish the correct time reference allowing each item to be ready at the same time.

The Week 6 discussion webs provided a basis for extended discussion and exploration of concerns held by the students. Experiencing the cause and effect nature of events combined with the multiple possibilities of situations and solutions encouraged the students to seek out various opinions and facts offered on the internet and in other sources. Students actively pursued additional information. At the close of the week, the students were still compiling additional information. No longer was gathering information foreign, nor was confidently expressing their opinions.

Reading about current law-related incidences in the newspaper and pop culture magazines seemed to elicit strong opinions from the participants during Week 7. The students

reacted strongly to repeated crimes, child abuse, and defense attorneys. Students were asked to research the law addressed in their article. Although this was a difficult task, the students nevertheless did not give up. Their motivation appeared to be a combination of interest, ownership of the task, and pride, desiring to demonstrate their abilities. They worked hard to gain additional facts about punishment, convictions, probation, and trials. They were minimally assisted by the researcher. Samantha and Antoine had the most difficulty navigating the internet due to their lack of experience with computers and their struggle with language.

In final week of the study, Week 8, the participants completed a story web based upon the novel. The students then integrating the theme, main events, and characters into events found in current pop culture magazines forming a new story web. Having become readers of popular publications, the students were able to develop story lines and create characters enmeshed in situations of interest to each participant. The students enjoyed this activity and demonstrated the ability to use multiple resources including the dictionary, thesaurus, newspapers, magazines, books, and elements of discussion. The students enjoyed sharing their stories and predicting what could happen to each other's characters. The students appeared to be comfortable with allowing the other participants to read their work and make comments. This demonstration of confidence reiterates the increase of self-esteem in the group.

Conclusions

Results of the descriptive study indicated that struggling readers involved in a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program demonstrated gains in both motivation and ability to read. A reexamination of the Life-Application Learning methods identified the immediate usefulness and personal application as being the significant catalysts for becoming more active readers.

Question #1 Impact on Motivation

The first question addressed in this research was "How has incorporating life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impacted reading motivation of the participating students?" To determine the beliefs and motivations of the participants, two expressive evaluative tools were employed, the Interest and Attitude Inventory and the Reading Usefulness Evaluation. Along with the Interest and Attitude Inventory and the Reading Usefulness Evaluation results, on-going student assessments were also gathered through weekly journal responses and researcher observations. Based upon the responses of the pre and posttest evaluations, the journals, and the researcher's observations, evidence suggested that students' motivation grew through the eight weeks of the life-application learning instructional program.

All students demonstrated an increase in motivation to read. One reason for the increase in interest may be attributed to the genres of texts assigned. Participants were introduced to a skill and shown the usefulness of that skill not only for meeting the requirements of the assignment but also for gaining knowledge concerning their particular areas of interest. Each skill was couched in a variety of different methods allowing the students to incorporate their prior knowledge into the assignments. Studies indicate that the link between a reader's attitude and comprehension may be considered variables, including the extent and relevance of prior knowledge, the task demands, and the context of the reading situation (Henk & Homes, 1988). Affording the participants the luxury of choosing the reading materials not only in an area of interest but also at a comfortable level of readability, which according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1997) is possibly one factor that may influence selection allowed each student to be the resident expert in that field, further empowering their efforts to attain success, a catalyst for greater attainment. Farnan (1996) emphasizes the importance of both individual and

social experiences with reading and engagement with culturally diverse genres and texts as middle school students learn about themselves and others. Atwell (1987) also contends that middle school students need person choice and response in reading. They were able to own their opinions and were respected for it.

We know from other research that struggling students must perceive immediate value in the assigned task (Sagor, 1993; Langer, 1997; Moore, Alvermann, & Hinchman, 200). A specific focus of the program was to delegate the reading selections to the students. This aspect provided the students the opportunity to choose the texts for their assignments. Through this students often embraced the incorporation of every day reading materials such as newspapers, magazines, reference materials, manuals, and cookbooks into the academic activity. Providing ownership, and thus a more positive attitude toward reading, gave the students a sense of control over their own repertoire of reading engagement "Studies have shown that a positive attitude toward the reading task may increase the reader's attention, strategy use, and persistence" (Alexander, Kulikowich, & Jetton, 1994, p. 246).

The students' tasks discussed in this study may also be a factor contributing to the findings. The activities, immediately linked to their lives, provided an interconnection which easily afforded the students a safe interchange to reach the next level. Participants became more active learners and appeared to develop a sense of control over their learning. This endorsement of their abilities may have been one source of encouragement for them to take ownership of the activity and to transfer its use to new and independent reading levels.

Providing students with a choice and giving students the time to read materials of their own choosing exemplify some of the effective strategies for literacy development that have become part of instructional practice. In addition, materials used for reading instruction are no

longer limited to passages that were traditionally part of basal programs, passages that were usually written in a manner that controlled for vocabulary, language and topic. Instead, many teachers use a range of texts and text types in their instruction, giving students exposure to divers reading materials and providing them opportunities to develop personal interests and preferences in reading (Hiebert, 1994). By linking student's intrinsic motivations to curriculum activities, the classroom becomes a site of possibility for students to become engaged in and to further their own literacy development.

Question #2 Impact on Reading Level

The second question of the study was "How has incorporating life-application learning in the middle school curriculum impacted the reading levels of the participating students?" To determine the readability levels of the students before and after the study, the Classroom Reading Inventory was employed. A pretest was individually administered to each participant during Week 0 and a posttest was individually administered during Week 9. All of the participants demonstrated an increase in reading ability. The pronounced difference in the Classroom Reading Inventory pre and posttests suggests that the readability growth was influenced by participant motivation as well as the life-application learning instructional methods.

Dr. French's testament regarding the participants' apathy toward reading assessment as stated in the Week 0 interview, combined with participant journal responses and researcher observations, and the Classroom Reading Inventory posttests, allows for some speculation with regard to the impetus for the amount of readability gains. In part, the noticeable increase may be attributed to not only the strategies used, but also, the increase in motivation evident throughout the study.

Although basic principles of educational measurement require extensive assessment, it has been criticized by some within the field of reading as creating a situation in which test takers may lack motivation and interest that support engagement and comprehension in more typical reading situations (Levande, 1993). Factors that may contribute to how well students perform on an assessment of reading comprehension include their perception of the difficulty of the task and their motivation for doing well on the assessment. Examining how hard students perceived the assessment to be, how well they thought they performed on the assessment, how hard they tried, and how important they felt it was to perform well on the assessment can further illuminate the effects of choice in an assessment of reading comprehension. As noted in the researcher observations, participants exhibited either a sense of anxiety or a demonstration of apathy when completing the pretest. The Classroom Reading Inventory posttest evaluations, however, were viewed with a renewed vigor and importance. The students appeared to more willingly engage in thoughtful consideration prior to reading or answering comprehension questions. Therefore, the findings suggest the combination of the life-application learning instruction and the participants' increased motivation created the foundation for greater reading levels.

Limitations of the Study

Within every study, there are limitations. Negotiating the parameters of quantitative research poses concern over issues of validity. Every attempt was made to insure the accuracy of this study. In do so, to some extent, the classroom setting may not completely reflect the typical classroom life.

The classroom setting created lead to several limitations of the study. First, the teacher in this study was not the students' regular teacher. It is not known if and to what extent students would have responded differently to instruction administered by their regular teacher and as part

of their ongoing reading program. Second, because the researcher is not their regular teacher, there was no opportunity to observer whether students incorporated the strategies taught them into their daily reading routine over the course of the school year.

Third, the data gathered from the Interest and Attitude Inventory were self reports rather than actual observation. Students reported what they did outside of the classroom and the researcher's observation. The responses must be taken at face value.

Finally, the perspective of the researcher may have influenced the participants.

Implications

Although the primary objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program, the study evolved over the eight-week period to include another possible objectives for study. In an effort to maintain focus on the two questions postulated for this study, other issues have proved relevant for future study. Example questions for further study might include:

1. How will incorporating a life-application learning instructional program affect reluctant readers?
2. How will incorporating a life-application learning instructional program affect reading with siblings?
3. How will incorporating a life-application learning instructional program affect reading with parents or caregivers?

In addition to possible extensions of this work, attention given to the motivational factors surrounding middle school reading can affect educational instruction in a variety of ways. Listening to the students' voices, both spoken and unspoken offered a small window into the conflict they experience between acceptance and academic success.

In sum, what do these findings tell us about the reading process in general and about reading instruction in particular? First, the findings highlight the students' desire to find meaning in their reading assignments. In addition, findings from this study also suggest that integrating multiple sources of reading material invites greater student participation. Students must not view reading as merely filling in the blanks. "Teachers who connect the content that is read by the class to their daily events, experiences and future lives can influence those students who seem to think the entire extent of their job is to fill in all the blanks on a worksheet" (Burns, 1999, p. 159).

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES

Phases	Dates	Tasks	Techniques
Phase I • Introductions • Field Entry • Design Issues	• 4 months • January 2002 • January 2002 • February 2002 • March 2002 • April 2002	• Sources of permission • Negotiate researcher role • Define objectives/ interests • Begin preparations of materials • Explore data collection techniques	• Student observations • Descriptive fieldnotes • Informal interviews • Informal/formal classroom assessments • Informal/formal student assessments • Effectiveness assessment
Phase II • Prospectus	• August 2002 • September 2002	• Preparations of materials • Develop research questions • Refine methodology • Meet with principal & teacher • Obtain necessary permission	• Reevaluate observations • Informal interview with teacher • Informal introduction to participants • Human subject forms • Lesson plan outline • Life Skills Application component
Phase III • Data Collection & analysis • Focused research	• Weekly • 2.5 months • November 2002 – January 2003 • Monthly • January 2003	• Observe students • Collect data • Data analysis • Effectiveness assessment • Confirm emerging themes	• Interest & Attitude Inventory pretest • Reading Usefulness Evaluation pretest • Journaling • CRI pretest • Incorporation of "life skill application" within the curriculum • CRI posttest • Reading Usefulness Evaluation posttest • Interest & Attitude Inventory posttest
Phase IV • Synthesis of Findings • Field Exit	• January 2003 • February 2003 • March 2003	• Identify assertions • Write first draft • Negative case analysis • Dissertation	• Triangulation • Thick description • Incorporate vignettes

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH SCHOOLS

Angelle Stringer
10390 Jefferson Hwy #237
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

August 30, 2002

Dr. Jennifer Baird, Director
Academic Accountability

Dr. Baird,

I am a full-time Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. I have completed my coursework and am continuing my dissertation research for a doctorate in reading. My major field of study is working with struggling students.

I am requesting permission to conduct the research for a study this semester at XXXXXX Middle Magnet School. This research should continue throughout the fall semester and into the Spring semester. It will involve no more than 10 students.

My work at the beginning of this semester will involve 8 students. I have already received approval from Mrs. XXXXXX, Principal and Dr. XXXXXX, Classroom Teacher. The students will be selected based upon academic need.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my research with you and answer any questions that you, the principals or teachers of XXXXXX Middle Magnet School may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelle Stringer

APPENDIX C

RESPONSE FROM EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH SCHOOLS

1050 South Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806
P.O. Box 2950, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-2950
Phone (225) 922-5400, Fax (225) 922-5411
EBRSCHOOLS.ORG

November 14, 2002

Angelle Stringer
10390 Jefferson Hwy
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

Dear Ms. Stringer:

The East Baton Rouge Parish School Board is pleased to approve your request to conduct research related to improved student performance in reading using connections between reading motivation and real-life activities. We ask that you work with the principal to minimize disruption and maximize the benefits that your program might have for students. We require that all data you collect protects the anonymity of participants and that you obtain parent permission prior to any audio or video recording.

Thank you for your interest in East Baton Rouge Public Schools. We hope that you will share your findings with us.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Baird

Jennifer Baird, Director
Academic Accountability

Cc: Herman Brister
Katie Blunschi

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

Angelle Stringer
10390 Jefferson Hwy #237
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

August 30, 2002

Dear Mrs. XXXXXXX,

I am a full-time Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. I have completed my coursework and am continuing my dissertation research for a doctorate in reading. My major field of study is working with struggling students.

I am requesting permission to conduct the research for a study this semester at your school, XXXXXX Middle School. This research should continue throughout the fall semester and will involve 8 students.

My work at the beginning of this semester will involve 8 students. The students will be selected based upon academic need.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my research with you and answer any questions that you, the staff or teachers of XXXX Middle School may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelle Stringer

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO TEACHER

Angelle Stringer
10390 Jefferson Hwy #237
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

August 30, 2002

Dear Dr. XXXXX,

I am a full-time Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. I have completed my coursework and am continuing my dissertation research for a doctorate in reading. My major field of study is working with struggling students.

I am requesting permission to conduct the research for a study this semester at your school, XXXXXX Middle XXXXX School. This research should continue throughout the fall semester and will involve 8 students.

My work at the beginning of this semester will involve 8 students. The students will be selected based upon academic need. I have also requested permission from Superintendent Wilcox and Mrs. XXXXXX.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my research with you and answer any questions that you, the staff or teachers of Istrouma Middle Magnet School may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelle Stringer

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I. Title of Research Study: The Impact of a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program on Struggling Readers at the Middle School Level

II. Project Director: Angelle Stringer
225-205-1038
astrin1@lsu.edu
Available M-F 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Supervisor – Dr. Earl Cheek
225-578-6017
Echeek@lsu.edu
Available M-F 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

III. Purpose of Research:

To describe the impact on middle schools students of using real life materials combined with the standards of the parish curriculum guide.

IV. Procedures for Research:

Students will be asked to complete an attitude and interest inventory, a classroom reading inventory and a questionnaire using a five point Likert scale. Students will also be asked to write journal entries addressing the activities in the program. Students will be asked the following questions about their families and family activities.

1. Do you have brothers or sisters? _____ brothers _____sisters
2. Are they older or younger? _____ older _____ younger
   What kinds of activities do you like to do with them?
   _____
3. Who lives in your home with you?_____
4. What do you like to do with _____?
   _____
5. Do you help with chores at home? _____
6. What do you do to help? _____
7. When you have time at home to spend just like you want, what do you like to do?
   _____
8. What would you like to be when you grow up? _____
9. Why do you want to be a _____? _____
10. What do you like most about yourself? _____
11. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? _____
12. What do you like most about your home or family? _____
13. What do you like least about your home and family?_____
14. Do you have an area at home to go and be alone? _____
    Where? _____

V. Potential Risks:

Names will be changed in the report. There will be no risk involved in identity and no risk involving feelings of failure as no testing is involved. Parents and students are welcome to call the researchers with any questions throughout the duration of the study.

VI. Potential Benefits:

Students will be encouraged to share personal insights and experiences. Reading activities are linked to their lives demonstrating the relationship between success in school and as a member of society.

VII. Alternative Procedure: None

VIII. Protection of Confidentiality:

IX. Signature: Include the actual statement of consent below for subjects 18 and over, and for parents/guardians of minor children. For minor children, also include a description of how assent will be attained.

"I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure, its possible benefits and risks. I agree to participate in the study. I understand that, at any time, I may choose to quit participating in the study."

_____

Participant's Name (Printed)

_____ _____

Participant's signature Date

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

Life-Application Learning Instructional Program

I. My name is Angelle Stringer. I am a graduate student at Louisiana State University.

II. I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn more about the impact of a Life-Application Leaning Instructional Program on struggling middle school readers.

III. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an attitude and interest inventory, a classroom reading inventory, and a questionnaire using a five point scale. You will be asked the following questions about your family and family activities.

1. Do you have brothers or sisters? _____ brothers _____sisters
2. Are they older or younger? _____ older _____ younger
   What kinds of activities do you like to do with them?
   _____
3. Who lives in your home with you?_____
4. What do you like to do with _____?
   _____
5. Do you help with chores at home? _____
6. What do you do to help? _____
7. When you have time at home to spend just like you want, what do you like to do?
   _____
8. What would you like to be when you grow up? _____
9. Why do you want to be a _____? _____
10. What do you like most about yourself? _____
11. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? _____
12. What do you like most about your home or family? _____
13. What do you like least about your home and family?_____
14. Do you have an area at home to go and be alone? _____
    Where? _____

IV. You will also be asked to write journal entries about the classroom reading activities we will be doing. Those activities may include using magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, video game direction manuals, novels, short stories, and the internet in addition to your regularly assigned classroom materials. I will use all of the results of our activities in a report.

V. There will be no risk to you involved in this research. When we are done with the study, I will write a report about what we found out. I will not use your name in the report.

VI. By participating in this study, you will be able to learn many reading strategies that may help you to be a better reader.

VII. This research project will help teachers learn more about ways to help middle school students become better readers.

VIII. I have already received permission from your parent(s) for you to participate in this research. Even though your parent(s) have given permission, you can still decide for yourself if you want to participate.

IX. If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.

X. You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you don't think of now, you can ask me later.

XI. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in the study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

_____
Name of Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

APPENDIX H

PARENT OR CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM

I. Title of Research Study: The Impact of a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program on Struggling Readers at the Middle School Level

II. Project Director:

Angelle Stringer
225-205-1038
astrin1@lsu.edu
Available M-F 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Supervisor – Dr. Earl Cheek
225-578-6017
Echeek@lsu.edu
Available M-F 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

III. Purpose of Research:

To describe the impact on middle school readers when incorporating real life text examples with the established curriculum guide required by the parish school system.

IV. Procedures for Research:

Students will be asked to complete an attitude and interest inventory, a classroom reading inventory and a questionnaire using a five point Likert scale. Students will also be asked to submit written responses addressing their reading and learning experiences. Students will be asked the following questions about their families and family activities:

Family

1. Do you have brothers or sisters? _____ brothers _____sisters
   Are they older or younger? _____ older _____ younger
   What kinds of activities do you like to do with them?
   _____
2. Who lives in your home with you?_____
3. What do you like to do with _____?
   _____
4. Do you help with chores at home? _____
5. What do you do to help? _____
6. When you have time at home to spend just like you want, what do you like to do?
   _____
7. What would you like to be when you grow up? _____
8. Why do you want to be a _____? _____
9. What do you like most about yourself? _____
10. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? _____
11. What do you like most about your home or family? _____
12. What do you like least about your home and family?_____
13. Do you have an area at home to go and be alone? _____
    Where? _____

V. Potential Risks:

Names will be changed in the report. There will be no risk involved in identity and no risk involving feelings of failure as no testing is involved. Parents are welcome to call the researchers with any questions throughout the duration of the study.

VI. Potential Benefits:

Students will be encouraged to share personal insights and experiences. Reading activities are linked to their lives demonstrating the benefit of acquiring skills crucial to success in school and as an adult.

VII. Alternative Procedure: None

VIII. Protection of Confidentiality:

IX. Signature: Include the actual statement of consent below for subjects 18 and over, and for parents/guardians of minor children. For minor children, also include a description of how assent will be attained.

"I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure, its possible benefits and risks and I give my permission (or participation of my child) in the study."

_____	_____	_____
Subject (or parent) signature	Subject (or Parent) name (Print)	Date

APPENDIX I

PARENT OR CAREGIVER ASSENT FORM

Life-Application Learning Instructional Program

I. What is this study about?

My name is Angelle Stringer. I am a graduate student at Louisiana State University. I am conducting a study using a Life-Application Learning Instructional Program for struggling middle school readers. I would like permission to have your child participate in this study.

II. What will happen to your child if he or she is in this study?

First, he or she will be complete an interest and attitude inventory, a classroom reading inventory and a questionnaire using a five point scale. Participants will be asked questions about their families and family activities as listed below.

1. Do you have brothers or sisters? _____ brothers _____sisters
2. Are they older or younger? _____ older _____ younger
   What kinds of activities do you like to do with them?
   _____
3. Who lives in your home with you?_____
4. What do you like to do with _____?
   _____
5. Do you help with chores at home? _____
6. What do you do to help? _____
7. When you have time at home to spend just like you want, what do you like to do?
   _____
8. What would you like to be when you grow up? _____
9. Why do you want to be a _____? _____
10. What do you like most about yourself? _____
11. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? _____
12. What do you like most about your home or family? _____
13. What do you like least about your home and family?_____
14. Do you have an area at home to go and be alone? _____
    Where? _____

Second, for eight weeks your child will participate in reading activities including, magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, video game direction manuals, novels, short stories, and the internet in addition to the regularly assigned classroom materials. He or she will also write journal entries describing his or her attitudes about the reading activities.

Third, in the ninth week, your child will be asked to complete the attitude and interest inventory, the classroom reading inventory and the questionnaire again to determine if a change has taken place.

III. Will there be any risk to your child?

There will be no risk involved to your child. His or her name will not be used in the report.

IV. What are the benefits to my child?

Your child will learn many different reading strategies which may help him or her to become a better reader. In addition, your child will be able to read a variety of different materials.

V. What if you have questions?

If you have any questions about the research program or about any activities that will be conducted, you can contact me at 225-205-1038.

VI. Does your child have to participate in this study?

Your child may participate in this study only if he or she has your permission and if your child wants to. No one will get mad at your child if you or he or she chooses not to participate.

VII. What if I agree now and change my mind later?

If you decide later that you do not want your child to continue in this study, he or she may stop at any time.

Signing this document means that you give your permission for your child to participate in this study. You understand that he or she may stop at any time.

_____
Parent's Name (Printed)

_____ _____
Parent's Signature Date

APPENDIX J

LSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

IRB #:_____ **LSU Proposal #:**_____

LSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) for HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECT PROTECTION 578-8692; FAX 6792 Office:203 B-1 David Boyd Hall

APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM INSTITUTIONAL OVERSIGHT

Unless they are qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/projects using living humans as subjects, or samples or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

Instructions: Complete this form. If exemption seems likely, submit it. If not, submit regular IRB application. Help is available from Dr. Robert Mathews, 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu or any screening committee member.

Principal Investigator Angelle Stringer **Student?** Y Y/N

Ph: 293-5992 **E-mail** astrin1@lsu.edu **Dept/Unit** C & I

If Student, name supervising professor Dr. E. Cheek Ph: 578-6017

Mailing Address 10390 Jefferson Hwy #237, BR 70809 Ph 293-5992

Project Title The Impact of Life Application Learning Instruction Program on Struggling Readers at the Middle School Level

Agency expected to fund project_____

Subject pool (e.g. Psychology Students) middle school students

Circle any **"vulnerable populations" to be used:** (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changed I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted.

PI Signature _____ **Date** _____ (no per signatures)

==========

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ____ Not Exempted ____

Reviewer _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Part A: DETERMINATION OF "RESEARCH" and POTENTIAL FOR RISK

This section determines whether the project meets the Department of Health and Human Services definition of "research" and if not,

whether it nevertheless presents more than "minimal risk" to humans that makes IRB review prudent and necessary.

1. **Is the project a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizeable knowledge?**

(Note "systematic investigation" includes "research development, testing and evaluation"; therefore some instructional development and service programs will include a "research" component).

[X] YES

[ ] NO

2. **Does the project present physical, psychological, social or legal risks to the participants reasonably expected to exceed those risks normally experienced in daily life or in routine diagnostic physical or psychological examination or testing?** You must consider the consequences if individual data inadvertently become public.

[ ] **YES Stop. This research cannot be exempted--submit application for IRB review.**

[X] **NO Continue** to see if research can be exempted from IRB oversight

3. **Are any of your participants incarcerated?**

[ ] **YES Stop. This research cannot be exempted--submit application for IRB review.**

[X] **NO Continue** to see if research can be exempted from IRB oversight.

Part B: EXEMPTION CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research is exemptible when <u>all</u> research methods are one or more of the following five methods. Check statements that apply to your study:

[ ] 1. **Uses only existing data, documents, records, or specimens properly obtained.**

The research must also comply with <u>one</u> of the following:

either that:

☐ a) subjects cannot be identified in the research data directly or statistically, and no-one can trace back from research data to identify a participant;

or that

☐ b) the sources are publicly available

☐ 2. Research or demonstration service/care programs, e.g. health care delivery.

The research must also comply with all of the following:

☐ a) It is directly conducted or approved by the head of a US Govt. department or agency.

and that

☐ b) it concerns only issues under usual administrative control (48 Fed Reg 9268-9), e.g., regulations, eligibility, services, or delivery systems;

and that

☐ c) its research/evaluation methods are also exempt from IRB review.

☒ 3. For research not involving vulnerable people [prisoner, fetus, pregnancy, children, or mentally impaired]: observe public behavior (including participatory observation), or do interviews or surveys or educational tests:

The research must also comply with one of the following:

either that

☒ a) the participants cannot be identified, directly or statistically;

or that

☐ b) the responses/observations could not harm participants if made public;

or that

☐ c) federal statute(s) completely protect all participants' confidentiality;

or that

☐ d) all respondents are elected,

appointed, or candidates for public officials.

[X] 4. In education setting, research to evaluate normal educational practices.

[ ] 5. For research not involving vulnerable volunteers [see "3" above], do food research to evaluate quality, taste, or consumer acceptance.

The research must also comply with one of the following:

[ ] *either that*
a) the food has no additives;

[ ] *or that*
b) the food is certified safe by the USDA, FDA, or EPA.

Exemption Applicant: **If it appears that your study qualifies for exemption send:**

(A) Two copies of this completed form,
(B) a brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts A & B),
© copies of all instruments to be used
(D) the consent form that you will use in the study

to: ONE screening committee member (listed below) in the most closely related department/discipline or to IRB office.

NOTE: Even when exempted, the researcher is required to exercise prudence in protecting the interests of research subjects, obtain informed consent if appropriate, and **must conform to the Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects (Belmont Report), 45 CFR 46, and LSU Guide to Informed Consent;** (Available from OSP or http://www.fas.lsu.edu/osp/irb)

HUMAN SUBJECTS SCREENING COMMITTEE MEMBERS can assist & review:

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES:			**MASS COMMUN/SOC WK/AG:**		
Dr. Northup *	(Psych)	578-4112	Dr. Nelson	(Mass C)	578-6686
Dr. Geiselman *	(Psych)	763-2695	Dr. Archambeault	(Soc Wk)	8-1374
Dr. Deseran	(Socio)	578-1113	Dr. Rose	(Soc Wk)	578-1015
Dr. Honeycutt	(Speech)	578-6676	Dr. Keenan*	(Hum Ecol)	578-1708
Dr. Dixit	(Comm Sc./Dis)	578-3938	Dr. Belleau	(Hum Ecol)	578-1535
ED/LIBRARIES/INFO SCI			**BUSINESS**		
Dr. Kleiner	(Middleton)	578-2217	Dr. Biswas	(Marketing)	578-8818
Dr. Culross	(Education)	578-5227			

Dr. Landin* (Kinesiol)	578-2916	
Dr. MacGregor (ELRC)	578-2150	
Dr. Munro* (Curric & I)	578-2352	
Dr. Barry (Lib/Sci)	578-3158	(* = IRB member)

APPENDIX K

INTEREST AND ATTITUDE INVENTORY

Name: _____ Date: _____
School: _____
Grade: _____ Age: _____Teacher: _____

Family

14. Do you have brothers or sisters? _____ brothers _____sisters
    Are they older or younger? _____ older _____ younger
    What kinds of activities do you like to do with them?
    _____
    _____
15. Who lives in your home with you?
    _____
    _____
16. What do you like to do with _____?
    _____
    _____
17. Do you help with chores at home? _____
18. What do you do to help?
    _____
    _____
19. When you have time at home to spend just like you want, what do you like to do?
    _____
    _____
    _____
20. What would you like to be when you grow up?
    _____
    _____
21. Why do you want to be a _____?
    _____
    _____
22. What do you like most about yourself?
    _____
    _____
23. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
    _____
    _____
24. What do you like most about your home or family?
    _____
    _____

25. What do you like least about your home and family?

_____

_____

26. Do you have an area at home to go and be alone? _____ Where?

_____

27. I am really happy when

_____

_____

28. I really get excited when

_____

_____

29. My greatest worry is

_____

_____

30. The best thing that ever happened to be was

_____

_____

31. When I was younger

_____

_____

32. I am really afraid when

_____

_____

III. Reading/Language

1. Given a choice, which do you like the best: writing, reading, talking, listening to stories, or drawing? _____
   Why?

   _____

   _____

2. Do you have any books of your own to read at home? _____
   What are the names of some of them?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What is the name of your favorite book?

   _____ Why?

   _____

4. Does someone read to you at home? _____
   What kind of stories do you like for them to read?

   _____

   _____

5. Do you read to someone at home?_____

Who? _____

6. Given a choice of the following, which would you prefer to do?
   - Watch television
   - Play with Nintendo games
   - Watch Videos
   - Read a book
   - Go to the mall
   - Visit the zoo
   - Go to the library
   - Play with a friend

7. Do you ever read magazines?
   Comics?
   Newspaper?
8. How important to you think it is to learn to read?
   - Very important?
   - A little?
   - Not at all?
9. I would love to read if _____
   OR
   I love to read when _____

10. Reading _____

School

1. Do like school? _____
   What is your favorite subject? _____
   Why? _____
   What is your least favorite subject? _____
   Why? _____

2. What did you enjoy most about school during the past year? _____
3. Do you ever get in trouble at school? If so, what kind? _____
   _____
4. When do you do your homework? _____
   Where do you do it? _____
   Is anyone available to help you with your homework? _____
   Who? _____
   Do you have a set time to go to bed on school days? _____
5. School would be better if only _____
   _____

Friends

1. Do you have a best friend? _____ Why is this person your best friend?
   _____

2. What do you enjoy doing most with your friends? _____
_____
3. Would you rather play with a friend or be by yourself? _____
Why? _____
4. I wish that _____ was my friend because _____
_____
5. I wish that my friends _____

Interests

1. Your favorite indoor games/activities are _____
2. Your favorite outdoor games/activities are _____
3. Do you like sports? _____ What sports do you like? _____
_____
4. Do you have any after-school activities such as team practice, music lessons, tutoring, etc.? _____
What do you think about these activities? _____
_____
5. Do you have any hobbies or collections? _____ What are they? _____
_____
6. Do you have any pets at home? _____ What are they? _____
_____
What do you do to help care for it/them? _____
_____

OR

If you don't have any pets, what kind of pet would you like to have? ____
_____ Why? _____
_____
7. If you could have three wishes and they might all come true, what would you wish for? _____
_____
_____
8. What do you usually do after school? _____
_____
When it rains? _____
On Saturdays? _____
In the summer? _____
9. Who do you admire the most? _____
Why? _____
_____
10. What are you favorite TV programs? _____
_____
11. Do you like to got to the movies? _____ What is your favorite movie?
_____
12. Do you like videos?_____ How often to watch one? _____

VII. First Hand Experiences

Have you been …

To the zoo?	To a farm?
To the circus?	To a summer camp?
On an airplane?	To a swimming pool?
On a train?	To the grocery store?
To the beach?	To a shopping center?
To the mountains?	On a long vacation trip?
On a boat?	To a restaurant?

VIII. Now that I have asked you these questions, is there something else you would like to tell me about yourself?

Collins, M. & Cheek, E., Jr. (1999). Assessing and guiding reading instruction. New York: McGraw-Hill.

APPENDIX L

READING USEFULNESS EVALUATION

THIS IS NOT A TEST. There are no right or wrong answers. Please circle the answer under the question that tells how you feel.

AGE _____ MALE OR FEMALE _____

1. Do you read every day?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

2. Is reading important to you?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

3. Do you need reading in every day life?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

4. Do you believe that reading is only something for school?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

5. Do you need to read when you go to a restaurant?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

6. Do you need to read to use a map?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

7. Do you need to read to go to the doctor's office?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

8. Do you need to read to become a part of your community?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

9. Do you like to read at home?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

10. Do you need to read to go grocery shopping?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

11. Do you need to read to be able to drive a car?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

12. Do you need to read to be able to have a checking or savings account?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

13. Do you need to read in order to cook dinner?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

14. Do you need to read in order to play sports?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

15. Do you need to read in order to sing?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

16. Do you need to be able to read to use the internet?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

17. Do you learn from the assigned readings in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

18. Do you enjoy reading if you can choose the reading material?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

19. Do you like true stories about real people?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

20. Do you like made up stories about made up people?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Not at all!	No, Not Much	Maybe	Yes, A Little	Yes, A lot

APPENDIX M

RELIABILITY TEST OF READING USEFULNESS EVALUATION

Reliability Test of Reading Usefulness Evaluation
E I – Event One E II – Event Two

Item	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5		Student 6		Student 7		Student 8		Student 9		Student 10	
	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II
1	4	4	3	3	1	1	4	4	3	4*	5	5	3	3	2	2	3	3	5	5
2	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5
3	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	2	2	4	4	5	5
4	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	4	5*	1	1	1	1
5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4*	4	4
6	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4
7	3	3	5	5	3	3	5	5	3	3	2	2	5	5	2	2	5	5	4	4
8	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	3
9	4	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	3	3	5	5	2	2	3	3	3	3	5	5
10	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	3	3	4	5*	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4
11	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	2	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5*	5	4*
12	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
13	4	4	5	5	4	4	1	1	3	3	2	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4*
14	5	5	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	4	5	5	3	3	5	5	4	4
15	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	2	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3
16	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4*	5	4*
17	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	5	3*	4	4	5	5
18	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5*	3	3	4	4	5	5
19	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
20	5	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	3	3	2	2	4	4	1	1	4	4	2	2
Degree of Reliability	**100 %**		**100%**		**100%**		**100%**		**95%**		**95%**		**95%**		**90%**		**85%**		**85%**	

* denotes one degree of variance ** denotes two or more degrees of variance

Reliability Test of Reading Usefulness Evaluation
E I – Event One E II – Event Two

Item	Student 11		Student 12		Student 13		Student 14		Student 15		Student 16		Student 17		Student 18		Student 19		Student 20	
	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II	E I	E II
1	2	2	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	3	1*	4	4	4	5*	2	2
2	2	3*	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	2	1*	5	4*	5	5	5	5	5	5
3	3	3	4	5*	1	1	3	4*	4	4	4	4	4	2**	4	4	4	5*	5	5
4	4	4	2	3*	1	1	1	1	3	4*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	4	4	5	5	1	1	4	4	4	5*	1	1	5	5	3	3	4	4	1	2*
6	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	2*
7	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	2	3*	5	5	2	2	5	5	3	2*
8	2	3*	3	3	2	3*	2	1*	1	5**	1	1	4	4	1	1	2	3*	4	2**
9	1	1	1	1	4	4	3	3	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	3**	4	5*	4	2**
10	4	4	4	5*	1	1	5	5	5	5	2	1*	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4
11	3	3	1	1	1	1	4	5*	4	2**	1	1	5	5	1	1	4	4	5	5
12	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	4	3*	3	4*	5	3**
13	4	4	5	5	5	3**	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4*	2	2	5	5
14	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	2	3*	3	2*	4	2**
15	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	1	1	1	1	5	5	1	1	5	5	5	5
16	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	3*	4	4	4	5*
17	5	4*	5	5	5	4*	4	5*	5	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
18	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	4	4	2	1*	4	3*	4	4	5	5	5	5
19	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	2	2
20	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	1	1	1	1	4	3*	3	4*	4	4	4	4
Degree of Reliability	**85%**		**85%**		**85%**		**80%**		**80%**		**80%**		**75%**		**70%**		**70%**		**60%**	

*denotes one degree of variance ** denotes two or more degrees of variance

APPENDIX N

CLASSROOM READING INVENTORY

NINTH EDITION

CLASSROOM READING INVENTORY

NICHOLAS J. SILVAROLI

Late of Arizona State University

WARREN H. WHEELOCK

University of Missouri-Kansas City

Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York San Francisco St. Louis
Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Lisbon London Madrid
Mexico City Milan New Delhi Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

Form A. Inventory Record

Summary Sheet

Student's Name: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Age:** _____ (year, months)

Date: _____ **School:** _____ **Administered by:** _____

Part 1 Word Lists			Part 2 Graded Paragraphs			
Grade Level	Percent of Words Correct	Word Recognition Errors		SIG WR	Comp	L.C.
PP	____%	Consonants _____consonants _____blends _____digraphs _____endings _____compounds _____contractions	PP			
P	____%		P			
1	____%		1			
2	____%		2			
3	____%	Vowels _____long _____short _____long/short oo _____vowel + r _____diphthong _____vowel comb. _____a + l or w	3			
4	____%		4			
5	____%		5			
6	____%		6			
7	____%	Syllable _____visual patterns _____prefix _____suffix	7			
8	____%		8			
		Word Recognition Reinforcement and Vocabulary Development	Estimated Levels Independent Instructional Frustration Listening Capacity		Grade	

Comp Errors
_____Factual (F)
_____Inference (I)
_____Vocabulary (V)
_____"Word Caller"
(A student who reads without associating meaning)
_____ Poor Memory

Summary of Specific Needs:

APPENDIX O

DR. FRENCH'S LESSON PLANS

Week 1

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Monday	Writing Connection ELA-2-M1, M2, M3	TLW write a paragraph, using paragraph format, to explain extreme sports
Wednesday	Introduce a short novel ELA-6-M3 Vocabulary ELA-1-M1	TLW become familiar with a new style of reading, the short novel, and learn the value of vocabulary and comprehension TLW define vocabulary words and use them in a sentence
Friday	Vocabulary ELA-1-M1	TLW define vocabulary words and use them in a sentence

Week 2

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Tuesday	Syllabication ELA-3-M5 Read & Comprehend ELA–1-M3	TLW divide words into syllable to correctly pronounce them TLW read a chapter & respond to the questions to enhance comprehension
Thursday	Syllabication ELA-3-M5 Read & Comprehend ELA–1-M3	TLW divide words into syllable to correctly pronounce them TLW read a chapter & respond to the questions to enhance comprehension

Week 3

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Monday	Skills mastery ELA-6-M3, ELA-3-M5 Vocabulary Review ELA-1-M1	TLW show mastery of skills regarding word pronunciation & meaning TLW play a game that helps to memorize and learn vocabulary words & definitions
Wednesday	Spelling ELA-3-M5 Vocabulary ELA-1-M1 Character Analysis ELA-1-M2	TLW identify words that are misspelled, then spell them correctly TLW show mastery of vocabulary by defining words & using them correctly in context TLW note characteristics of the main character in the story
Friday	Spelling ELA-3-M5 Character Analysis ELA-1-M2	TLW identify words that are misspelled, then spell them correctly TLW note characteristics of the main character in the story

Week 4

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Tuesday	Vocabulary ELA-1-M1 Comprehension ELA-1-M3	TLW choose a word to correctly complete a sentence by using context clues. TLW reread Chs. 1 & 2 in the book *High Elk's Treasure* to better comprehend the story
Thursday	Vocabulary ELA-1-M1 Vocabulary Development ELA-1-M3	TLW choose a word to correctly complete a sentence by using context clues. TLW define the story vocabulary words and use them correctly in a sentence

Week 5

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Monday	Skill Quiz ELA-6-M3, ELA-3-M5 Writing Connection ELA-2-M1, M2, M3, M4, M5	TLW show mastery of spelling and vocabulary on a quiz TLW focus on Indian Symbols for writing to create an Indian story
Wednesday	Synonyms ELA-1-M5 Review Vocabulary ELA-1-M1 Silent Reading ELA-7-M1	TLW use context to make a connection between two words that have similar meanings. TLW play vocabulary concentration to practice vocabulary TLW read Ch. 3 "High Elk's Cave" silently to comprehend the text
Friday	Synonyms ELA-1-M5 Vocabulary ELA-1-M1 Read & Comprehend ELA – 1-M3	TLW use context to make a connection between two words that have similar meanings. TLW show mastery of vocabulary by defining words & using them correctly in context TLW answer questions about a chapter to assist comprehension of a novel

Week 6

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Tuesday	Homophones ELA-1-M5 Read & Comprehend ELA–1-M3	TLW use context to determine the correct meanings & spellings of homophones TLW read a chapter & answer questions about the chapter to assist in comprehension of the novel
Thursday	Homophones ELA-1-M5 Reasoning & Webbing ELA-7-M1, M2, M4	TLW use context to determine the correct meanings TLW reread Ch. 3 & review Joe's decisions & his concerns over those decisions by completing a web

Week 7

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Monday	Skill Quiz ELA-1-M5 Comprehension ELA-1-M3	TLW show mastery of identifying synonyms & homophones in context TLW exhibit comprehension of chapters by answering questions about the stories
Wednesday	Skill – Capitalization & Punctuation ELA-3-M2 Review Vocabulary ELA-1-M1	TLW identify capitalization & punctuation errors in sentences. TLW define vocabulary words and create sentences using words correctly in context
Friday	Skill – Capitalization & Punctuation ELA-3-M2 Read & Comprehend ELA – 1-M3 Enrichment ELA-7-M4	TLW identify capitalization errors in sentences TLW read a chapter & comprehend the main topics in the chapter TLW create an Indian Mask that defines him/herself as an Indian warrior or squaw

Week 8

Day	Lesson Topic	Objectives
Tuesday	Vocabulary ELA-1-M1 Read & Comprehend ELA–1-M3	TLW define words & use the words correctly in a sentence TLW read a chapter of a short novel & respond to comprehension questions
Thursday	Read & Comprehend ELA–1-M3 Creative Writing ELA-2-M2, M4, M5, M6	TLW read a chapter of a short novel & respond to comprehension questions TLW review common Indian symbolic writing & create their own symbols

APPENDIX P

MONITOR'S DOCUMENTATION

January 27, 2003

To Whom It May Concern:

I observed and testify that Angelle Stringer conducted an eight-week study with eight struggling readers in the eighth grade. She integrated Life-Application Learning Methods with the school curriculum.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Smith

Mrs. Smith, Teacher

APPENDIX Q

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Week	
1	Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?
2	Is reading important? Why or why not?
3	What do you do when you are not at school? Does it involve reading? Why or why not?
	Did studying about Native American history in your area make learning more or less interesting?
4	Is reading useful outside of school? How?
5	What would you like to read? Why?
	Did understanding propaganda effect the way you read?
6	What did you read over the weekend?
	Did researching your school concern encourage you to read more?
7	Have your views of reading changed?
	How did the law-related activity affect your reading?
8	After this program, do you think you are a better reader?
	Did the story webs encourage you to read?

VITA

Angelle Stringer was reared in Crowley, Louisiana. She received her bachelor of science degree in secondary English education at Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana and her master of education degree in reading at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Angelle has taught middle and high school English, middle school reading, and speech and debate.

The focus of Angelle's career has been working with struggling adolescents. After teaching for seven years, she served as the Secondary Advisor for Safe and Drug Free Schools in Rapides Parish School System, and Teen Court Director for the Ninth Judicial Court in Rapides Parish. In December of 2000, Angelle moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana to complete the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in reading.

Angelle is currently serving as the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators' Project Director for the Teach Louisiana Consortium, an alternative teacher certification program.

She lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.